



**TWENTY YEARS  
OF PLAYSTATION**





# TWENTY YEARS OF PLAYSTATION

"BY CREATING A POWERFUL PLATFORM AND  
ECOSYSTEM, TALENTED GAME DEVELOPERS WILL  
CREATE AMAZING GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCES TO  
ENTERTAIN CONSUMERS IN THE GLOBAL MARKET."

SHUHEI YOSHIDA, SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT WORLDWIDE STUDIOS PRESIDENT

## INTRODUCTION

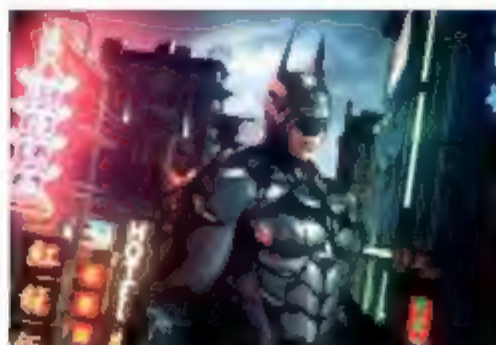
Across two decades and six major consoles, PlayStation has helped redefine interactive entertainment for generations of gamers. This month, PlayStation celebrates its twentieth birthday here in the UK. Maybe you've been with Team PlayStation since the original WipEout and that T-rex demo, or perhaps you're new to gaming and PS4 is giving you your first ever experiences? Whatever your history with PlayStation, enjoy our look back at the last twenty years and join us to continue the celebrations online at [www.gamesradar.com/DPM](http://www.gamesradar.com/DPM).

Words by Matthew Pellett, Louise Blain & Paul Randall  
Design by Milford Coppock

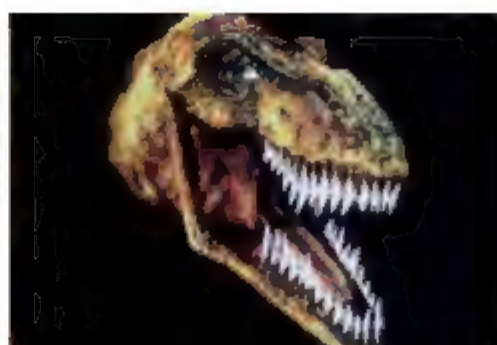




# 20TH ANNIVERSARY

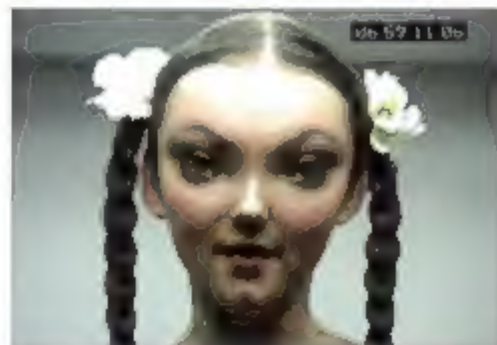
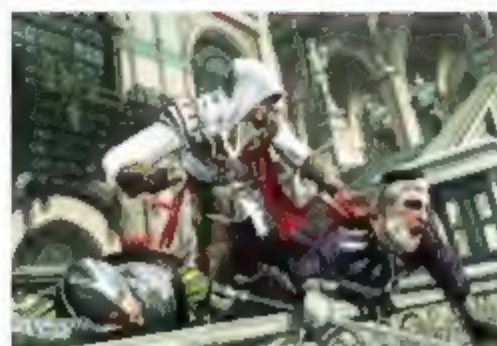






# TWENTY YEARS OF PLAYSTATION

As PlayStation turns 20 here in the UK, we look back at over two decades of greatness from Sony's gaming wonderboxes, peek ahead to its future, and select the team's favourite games







## VIRTUA FIGHTER, JAPANESE PLAYSTATION LAUNCH & RIDGE RACER

**W**hat's the most influential game in PlayStation history? Metal Gear Solid? Tomb Raider? Uncharted? Try Sega's 1993 arcade sensation *Virtua Fighter*, a 3D wireframe fighting game that, ironically, never even made it to PlayStation.

*Virtua Fighter* was unleashed upon Japanese arcades in December 1993, just a month after the formation of Sony Computer Entertainment, which was tasked with creating the first PlayStation's architecture. And as

worked together on the original version of PlayStation – a CD-ROM add-on for the SNES that collapsed after an acrimonious split between the two companies over rights.

But although Sony had arrived at the dance on time, it faced massive obstacles if it were to unseat the status quo. To many within the industry, PlayStation seemed destined to be merely the latest in a long line of failed attempts from lumbering tech giants who lacked the local knowledge to break into the lucrative videogames

**"SONY HAD WORKED WITH NINTENDO ON THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF PS1 – A CD-ROM ADD-ON FOR THE SNES."**

revealed years later by producer Ryoji Akagawa, the moment the Sony team clamped eyes on the technically impressive *Virtua Fighter* and its polygonal pugilists was the moment that the company decided to commit to making its debut console a 3D-focused system, rather than a 2D-based one.

The final version of PlayStation hardware was completed in a timespan of just six months, quick enough for it to launch in Japan on 3 December 1994 – just a few short weeks after the competing Sega Saturn console.

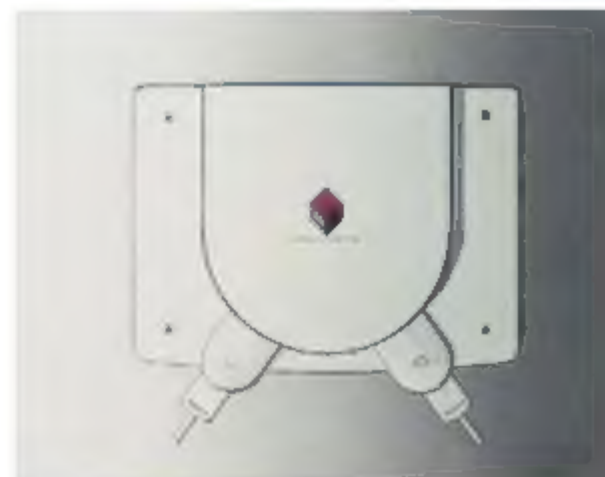
The speedy turnaround would also give it an 18 month head start over Nintendo's N64 system. Nintendo, of course, being Sony's ex-business partners, who had

market – attempts such as Philips' CD-i, or Panasonic's 3DO, both of which flopped due to high prices and a lack of software.

Sony, which had previously worked with Philips on the CD-i, realised that regardless of backing or heritage, without games, consoles are destined to fail. The

company spent much of 1994 aggressively courting third-party companies such as Namco and Konami, as well as acquiring British studio Psygnosis, giving Sony a strong in-house team and cutting edge software tools.

An arcade-perfect port of Namco's *Ridge Racer* would prove the most valuable asset come PlayStation's release as it prepared to lock heads with Sega Saturn, which launched with its own arcade-perfect port; a game known as – hey, would you believe it! – *Virtua Fighter*.



Some of the conceptual designs for the original PlayStation console. Is it just us or does that middle one look oddly like a Nintendo GameCube?





Much like the console itself, the original digital controller went through many design iterations.



007



Designed to work in similar way to Sega's Mega CD hardware add-on for the Mega Drive, the PS1 was originally intended to bring CD-ROM support to SNES.





## PLAYSTATION COOL, THE PRICE HEARD AROUND THE WORLD & WIPEOUT

**W**hile Sega Saturn's sales initially enjoyed a slight edge, PlayStation rallied faster than anyone could have imagined, selling an impressive one million units in a period of just five months. The fledgling system also enjoyed cult popularity among importers in the West, who were attracted to PlayStation's new visuals at a time when the SNES/Mega Drive console war was stagnating so badly, **algae was forming in its cartridge slots.**

But Sony knew that mass market success in the West would be a whole different proposition. Sony's reputation as a technology powerhouse counted for nothing here; it needed to



They may look super blocky now, but in 1995 these visuals were the cutting edge in videogames.

Michael Jackson was among the celebs spotted at the PlayStation Party.

But then, as now, the question of 'who won E3?' would be answered in the press conference hall. Sega looked to steal the show before Sony could even get out of the blocks, with its

ninety-nine," and withdrew to rapturous applause. It became known as 'the price heard around the world.'

### PLAYING IT COOL

PlayStation's aggressive price point convinced many to hold out until September. But ironically, Sega's shock tactics arguably proved to be PlayStation's biggest ally. News of Saturn's premature release caught stores and developers alike on the hop, resulting in a console that was grossly understocked and lacked killer games.

When PlayStation coolly sauntered into stores later that year with a well-rounded launch line-up including the likes of Rayman and Battle Arena Toshinden, it instantly became that year's hot property, selling 100,000 units in just two days in the US, and 350,000 in Europe by Christmas. Namco's Tekken arrived in November, and swiftly became the first PlayStation game to sell a million.

**"SONY KNEW PLAYSTATION HAD TO OFFER SOMETHING SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT TO SEGA AND NINTENDO."**

prove it could offer something substantially different to rivals Sega and Nintendo.

And where better to have your coming out party than at the first ever Electronics Entertainment Expo? Setting the stage for decades of excess and debauchery to come, Sony splashed out a cool four million dollars on their E3 presence; the then red-hot

mind-bending announcement that Sega Saturn would retail at \$399, and would go on sale that very instant, giving Sega a four month head start.

How could Sony possibly turn momentum back into its favour after that bombshell? As it turned out, it took SCEA president Steve Race two seconds and three words. He took to the podium, calmly uttered, "two

THE  
YEAR'S  
TOP  
THREE  
GAMES



**1 Ridge Racer**  
Rimidge Raaaa... well, you get the idea. Arcade driving doesn't get much better than this sunny 3D racer, which helped to establish the original PlayStation as the ideal home for lavishly faithful arcade ports.

PUB NAMCO DEV NAMCO



**2 Wipeout**  
Psygnosis' pumping futuristic racer was the game of an era - that era being the time of glowsticks, raves and The Chemical Brothers. CDs proved their worth with the exceptional licensed techno soundtrack that accompanied it.

PUB PSYGNOSIS DEV PSYGNOSIS



**3 Destruction Derby**  
Before Burnout, Reflections' smashy PSI game provided all our car-crunching needs. The physics, at the time, felt hugely realistic, and we spent many an hour causing huge pile-ups in its violently satisfying Bowl arena.

PUB PSYGNOSIS DEV REFLECTIONS





Despite being new to the industry, Sony made all the right business moves to make PlayStation a hit.

"SEGA'S SHOCK TACTICS WITH SATURN WOULD BECOME PLAYSTATION'S BIGGEST ALLY."





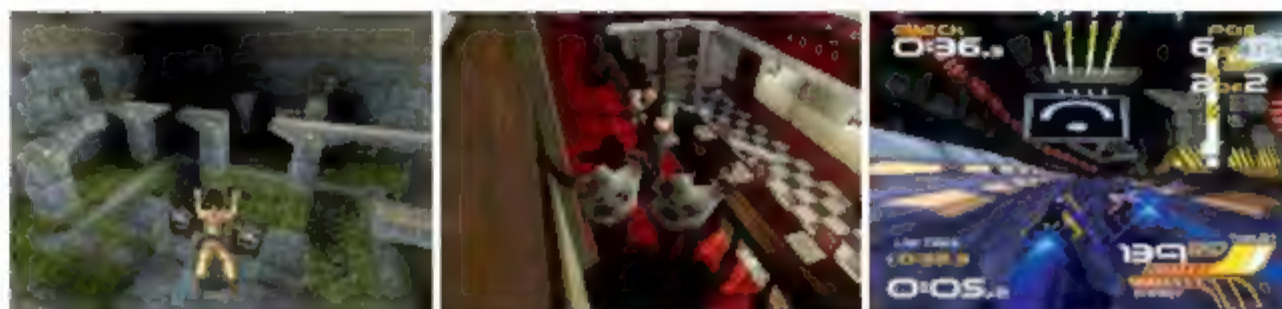
## LARA CROFT, RESIDENT EVIL & SOCIETY AGAINST PLAYSTATION

**O**ften referred to as the 'Golden Year Of Gaming', 1996 was the year that first introduced us to some of PlayStation's most beloved franchises. And, er, Crash Bandicoot, too. (Joke!) Naughty Dog's caffeine-crazed marsupial was Sony's first serious attempt at creating an anthropomorphic mascot capable of rubbing shoulders with Mario and Sonic The Hedgehog. Sony, however, promoted him as anything but a like-for-like replacement.

Keen to distance themselves from gaming's old guard, Sony took the bold move of hiring trend-setting agency TBWA to create an advertisement campaign that would target a new untapped demographic of teen and twenty-something slackers. The controversial but extremely successful campaign featured, among other risible stunts, pictures of PlayStation pads on perforated roach papers, and flyers left in phone boxes (remember them?) advertising the services of one, "Randy Bandicoot," who lewdly promised fun times.

### TEAM 3D

And while they were decent times, 1996 marked the beginning of the end of the dominance of the cheery platform mascot. PlayStation was at the vanguard of a cultural shift in gaming: demand for chili dog-



Embracing the third dimension was the crux of PS1's appeal - those original Raider tombs still give us chills.

munching hedgehogs and bouncy plumbers would soon give way for a demand for cop-munching zombies and bouncy, er, archaeologists.

We're referencing, of course, the emergence of two of PlayStation's most influential and iconic series - Resident Evil and Tomb Raider,

**"BOTH RESIDENT EVIL AND TOMB RAIDER SHOWED OFF THE TRUE POTENTIAL OF 3D."**

which would make their respective bows in August and November. Both games demonstrated, in wildly different ways, the true potential of 3D gaming - enabling players to explore immersive, emotionally-affecting virtual worlds. And the signs were that PlayStation's future was even brighter

with news that Square Enix had cancelled development of its N64-exclusive RPG Final Fantasy VII to start work on a PlayStation version. Teaser commercials suggested it was a shrewd decision, boasting graphics far beyond those seen in early cartridge-bound N64 prototypes.

By the year's end, the PlayStation juggernaut had reached warp speed with over ten million consoles sold across the globe. The console's library had mushroomed to over 200 titles - including instant classics such as Wipeout 2097, Tekken 2 and more besides. Sony had done such a good job of positioning PlayStation as the 'must have' console that it felt comfortable enough to run a now-famous anti-ad TV campaign, in which a conservative group known as Society Against PlayStation (SAPS) extolled the virtues of buying a harmless, wholesome stick over the morally bankrupt PlayStation console. Oh Sony, you scamp.

## THE YEAR'S TOP THREE GAMES



**1 Tomb Raider**  
Eidos' polygonal-breasts-sell marketing campaign may have sullied its reputation, but the original Tomb Raider remains one of the smartest exploration games of the 1990s. Its use of 3D space was exceptional.

PUB EIDOS DEV CORE DESIGN



**2 Resident Evil**  
Capcom invented a genre with Resident Evil, a game equal parts Alone In The Dark and George A Romero's undead filmography. The lines might be hokey (in fact, they definitely are) but that dog scare still makes us jump.

PUB CAPCOM DEV CAPCOM



**3 Crash Bandicoot**  
The game's gorgeous 3D art, and novel into-the-screen platforming, helped turn Crash Bandicoot into one of the PlayStation's biggest stars. Now if only Naughty Dog would return to its Taz-like marsupial hero...

PUB SONY DEV NAUGHTY DOG





## FINAL FANTASY VII, PARAPPA THE RAPPER & ANALOGUE CONTROLS

**B**y 1997, it was becoming clear that Sega Saturn was destined to fail. By the summer of that year, Sega's share of the market had plummeted to just 12%. That left just one company standing in the way of PlayStation and world domination – Sony's old adversary, Nintendo.

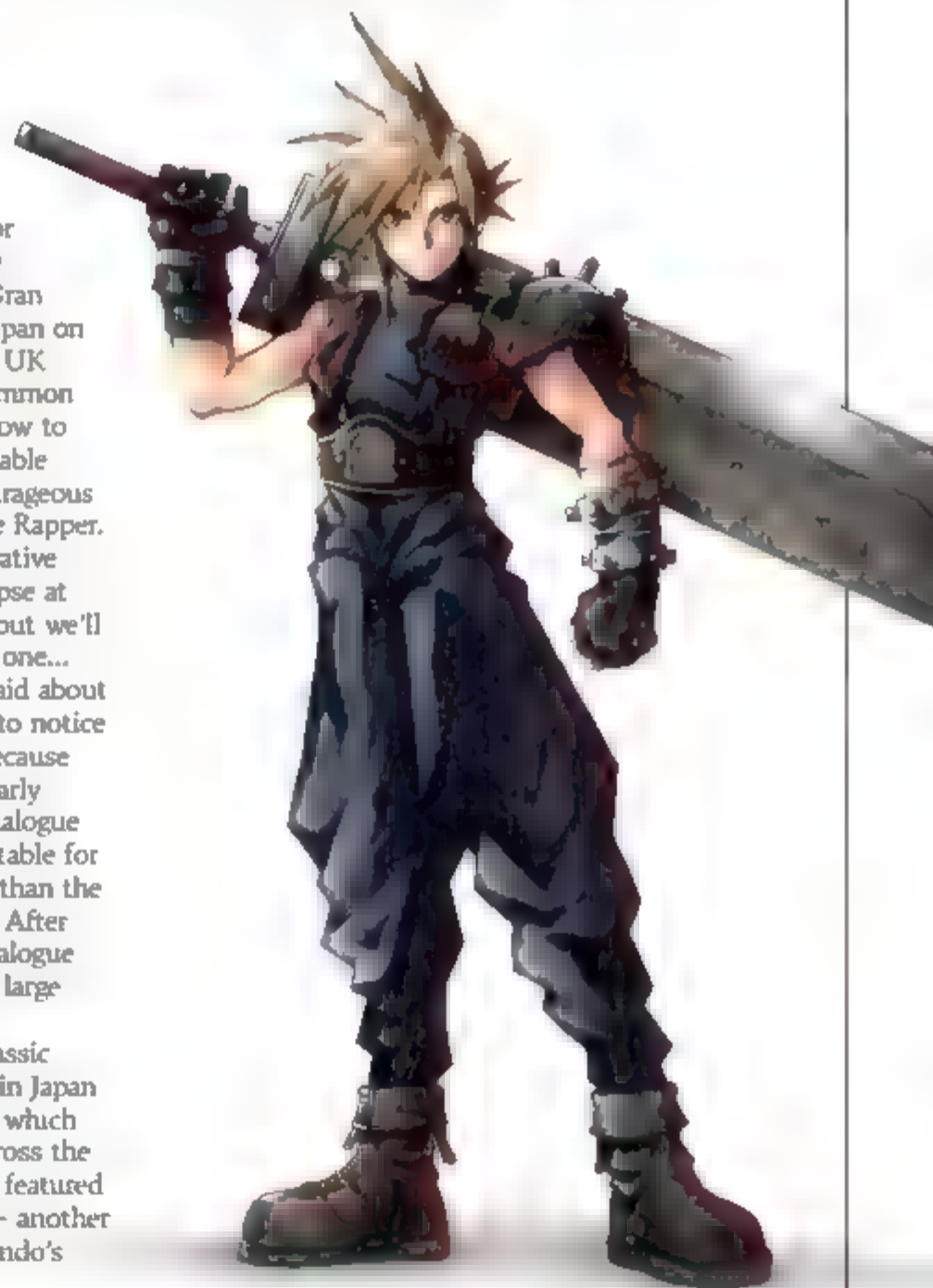
The much-delayed Nintendo 64 system finally arrived in Europe in March, but by this point Sony was almost too busy pumping out the hits to notice. Final Fantasy VII, the RPG that remains the genre's benchmark over 15 years later, arrived in Japan in January and in the rest of the world that autumn. Success was instant: in the three days following its launch in Japan, Final Fantasy VII shifted a whopping 2.3 million copies.

### DUALSHOCK RISING

This was to be expected, given the Japanese audience had long gone ga-ga for Square Enix's RPG output. What wasn't to be expected however, was that it would also replicate this success stateside, selling one million copies before the calendars flipped to 1998. A long and extensive advertising campaign, which included theatrical adverts and Marvel comic book spin offs, pulled off the impressive feat of turning PlayStation's too-cool-for-school audience into an army of nerdy stat crunchers.

1997 saw PlayStation's catalogue grow ever more diverse, catering for almost every need. If you were looking for driving lessons, for example, you could go for the so-serious-it-hurts car sim Gran Turismo, which debuted in Japan on 23 December ahead of its '98 UK release, or you could leave common sense at the door and learn how to three-point turn with an irritable rapping moose in beyond-outrageous rhythm actioner PaRappa The Rapper. Amid this onslaught of innovative titles, we also got a first glimpse at Metal Gear Solid at E3 1997, but we'll let 1998 tell the story of that one...

Now, remember what we said about Sony being 'almost' too busy to notice Nintendo? We say 'almost', because someone at Sony HQ had clearly noticed N64's ultra-comfy analogue stick, which was far more suitable for movement across a 3D plane than the rigid directional pads of yore. After trialling a short-lived dual analogue controller with rib-piercingly large handlebars, Sony released its first proper revision of the classic PlayStation controller design in Japan on 20 November. DualShock, which added two analogue sticks across the bottom of the controller, also featured two built-in rumble motors – another feature 'borrowed' from Nintendo's 64-bit console.



When its gripping story was over, we were hooked for life. Now all we have to do is wait for that PS4 Remake

**FOR SQUARE DEV SQUARE**

### Final Fantasy VII

Square had largely ignored the UK until Final Fantasy VII, so for many of us this was our first exposure to the JRPG genre. When its gripping story was over, we were hooked for life. Now all we have to do is wait for that PS4 Remake



the linear exploration of old Castlevias for an expansive Gothic environment that made full use of the CD format

**FOR KONAMI DEV KONAMI**

### Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night

The original Metrodvania. Symphony swapped the linear exploration of old Castlevias for an expansive Gothic environment that made full use of the CD format



been repurposed since, but PaRappa remains a true original, set in its own weird, hilarious universe

**FOR SONY DEV NANAON-SHA**

### PaRappa The Rapper

Kick, punch, it's all in the mind with NanaOn-Sha's imitable rhythm action game. Its systems have





## METAL GEAR SOLID, GRAN TURISMO & DUALSHOCK

**H**ow about this for an E3 line-up? Gran Turismo, Metal Gear Solid, Tekken 3, Silent Hill, Parasite Eve, Syphon Filter and Twisted Metal 3. 1998 saw PlayStation in the prime of its life. While Nintendo struggled to fill its games calendar and Sega officially announced the discontinuation of Sega Saturn, PlayStation's cup continued to runneth over. By the end of the year, the number of consoles shipped stood at nearly 50m worldwide.

By this point in the console's lifecycle, developers had begun to

Indeed, it appeared developers were thirsty to extract more from PlayStation hardware. DualShock made it to western shores in May, alongside the international release of Gran Turismo — the first game to make use of the analogue sticks and the internal rumbling motors, which were used to simulate the physical feedback of a racetrack. By August, DualShock was established as the de facto default pad for PlayStation, although a game wouldn't come along that made the new controller mandatory until the arrival of monkey bonanza Ape Escape in 1999.

**"WITH NINE MILLION UNITS SOLD IN 1998, PLAYSTATION HAD EMERGED AS THE WINNER OF THE FIFTH GEN."**

master PlayStation's complex architecture and games were becoming ever more confident — and no game oozed more pizzazz than Hideo Kojima's magnum opus, Metal Gear Solid, which arrived in Japan and the US a few months before it debuted in the UK in Feb 1999. It was, of course, a playful espionage title designed to make use of every last one of PS1's design features — including one antagonist breaking the fourth wall by reading your memory card.

Although Nintendo 64 remained in decent health throughout 1998, selling an estimated nine million units that year, PlayStation had emerged the clear winner of the fifth generation console war. However, there was little time for Sony to plump up its laurels and have a good rest — on 27 November, Sega released Dreamcast over in Japan, kickstarting the sixth generation of the console wars. Sony's response to the Dreamcast would be swift, and it would be decisive.



THE  
YEARS  
THE  
FIFTH  
GEN



**Resident Evil 2**  
With the T-Virus running rampant in Raccoon City, the scene was set for another thrilling survival horror from Shinji Mikami and Hideki Kamiya. Great characters, a fresh setting and increased stakes made this an essential sequel.  
PUB LAPCOM DEV CAPCOM



**Gran Turismo**  
Racing sims came to PlayStation in earnest with Gran Turismo, an insanely detailed driving game that gave us the life of a car enthusiast without requiring all that money and driveway space. It's ropey now, but in '98 it was mind-blowing.



**Tekken 3**  
The fifth-best-selling PlayStation game of all-time, and rightly so. Tekken 3 is PlayStation's seminal fighter and remains one of the genre's milestone releases. It also enabled players to exploit each arena's 3D space for the first time.



1999

## MENTAL WEALTH, POCKETSTATION, DUALSHOCK & APE ESCAPE

Let me tell you what bugs me about the human endeavour," smirked a Scottish girl with eyes that were just a tad too far apart for our liking. Yup, we're looking at 1999, the year when you could never underestimate the power of PlayStation or remove the sense of genuine unease from the back of your neck after watching the now-legendary TV ad.

While we dangled our legs off the precipice of the 20th century, music hoard Napster made its debut on that pesky internet you had to physically push your Mum off the phone to use and Japan got the ultimate PlayStation accessory in the shape of PocketStation. Yes, we're still green



With Crash channeling Mario Kart and survival horror going prehistoric and psychological, '98 was very eclectic.

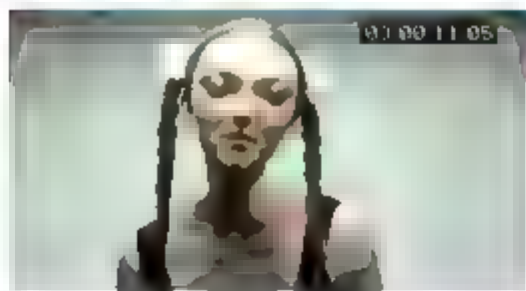
eyed and a bit upset about the whole thing, but this little memory card peripheral was a true phenomenon with its LCD display, infra red comms and the ability to carry your PlayStation around in your pocket for some mini-game fun. The initial run of 60,000 sold out immediately and

were only just appearing to transform our gaming horizons forever. Plus, Ape Escape, the second ever title from Sony Japan Studio, became the first game to make dual analogue sticks mandatory with our now-staple movement and camera controls.

Studio-wise, SCE Santa Monica was launched as PlayStation went from strength to strength and, while Nintendo teased the tech behind what would become the GameCube

and Sega celebrated the launch of their Dreamcast with a joy akin to that of Titanic's passengers on the first night of its maiden voyage, Sony took to the Tokyo Game Show in September and revealed a certain black box. Showing off its pixel processing skills with Tekken Tag Tournament and Gran Turismo 3, PlayStation 2 was ready to take over the world.

## "APE ESCAPE WAS THE FIRST GAME TO MAKE DUALSHOCK'S ANALOGUE STICKS MANDATORY."



Sony's edgy and downright surreal marketing strategy extended into PS2's lifetime, too.

Sony just couldn't make the little box fast enough to supply demand. Both EU and NA releases were scrapped and we never got to take Crash Bandicoot on the romantic date to the cinema we'd always dreamed of. \*sob\*

Meanwhile, the big grey box was half a decade old, but you wouldn't know it as games such as Crash Team Racing, Dino Crisis and Silent Hill



## THE YEAR'S TOP THREE GAMES



**Metal Gear Solid**  
Konami transformed a top-down stealth game into a cinematic blockbuster with the original MGS. This is leaner and less self-indulgent than its sequels, but Kojima's at his maddest in the infamous Psycho Mantis fight.

PUB NAMCO DEV NAMCO



**Ridge Racer Type 4**  
Namco continued to demonstrate its mastery of the original PlayStation with Ridge Racer Type 4, a stark technological improvement that made the original look like a game from a previous gen. Fast, slick and gorgeous drifting.

PUB NAMCO DEV NAMCO



**Silent Hill**  
If Resident Evil was a Romero flick, then Silent Hill was a David Lynch movie with the creepy surrealism at maximum. It's a psychological horror that plays on your deepest fears, then smothers them in acres of dense, claustrophobic fog.

PUB KONAMI DEV TEAM SILENT





## PLAYSTATION 2, TIMESPLITTERS, PSONE & METAL GEAR SOLID 2

**N**othing exploded, the power didn't fizzle out and there wasn't a single zombie involved, so the proposed Y2K apocalypse was, quite frankly, a bit of a disappointment. Meanwhile, more importantly, the console that would go on to be the best-selling in history (with more than 155 million units) launched in Japan in the third month of the new millennium.

We might sound biased but PlayStation 2, with its powerful Emotion Engine CPU and in-built DVD player, was a home console revolution. Launched in North America in October and our fair green lands a month later — with titles such as TimeSplitters, Tekken Tag Tournament and Ridge Racer V — the black box was instantly, predictably in dire shortage.

So what did everyone do when they couldn't get a PlayStation 2 for Christmas? Well, some sold a kidney and took themselves to eBay to spend over the odds and everyone else bought a Dre.

That's right. In the same year it launched its sixth gen console, Sony had the wise idea to release a slimmed down version of the original PlayStation. Positively cute with rounded edges, and nearly the same size as the original DualShock, the PSone started Sony's now-regular obsession with console shrinkage. It also very quickly started nailing Sega's Dream coffin shut as it went on to outsell all other consoles for the rest of the year — including PS2.

### TOP GEAR

When it came to games, nothing else mattered other than Kojima's spectacular E3 announcement of Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty. The looping five-minute trailer at the Konami stand left E3 goers with their jaws dragging along the showfloor at the level of detail invading their eyeballs. From water that just



As unrepresentative of the rest of the game it would prove to be, the Tanker level became a symbol of PlayStation 2's power.

**"WHEN IT CAME TO PS2 GAMES, NOTHING ELSE REALLY MATTERED OTHER THAN MGS2."**

be possible on a games console as Snake's boots splashed up flights of stairs to lighting effects we'd never even dreamed of

In the heady days before shiny pre-rendered trailers and booming Dark Knight-influenced soundtracks, we were gifted a rich gameplay-based treat that sent the hype train for Sons Of Liberty into overload. This was the future and it was from Hideo Kojima.



### Vagrant Story

Yasumi Matsuno's classic has one of gaming's best translations, its cod-Shakespearean turns-of-phrase imbuing this story of manipulation and ancient magic with an almost literary depth

PUB SQUARE DEV SQUARE



### Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

The Birdman returned to PlayStation with a bunch of new tricks in tow, including the first appearance of manuals — and the Create-A-Skater and Park Editor features that enhanced his games considerably.

PUB ACTIVISION DEV NEVERSOFT



### SSX

Launch games don't have the best reputations, but when SSX arrived with PlayStation 2 it was a breath of fresh alpine air. It certainly wasn't the first snowboarding game, but its memorable characters and complex combos mean it's still one of the best

PUB EA DEV EA CANADA

THE  
YEAR'S  
TOP  
TRICKS





PS2 also had a big hand in DVD's success as a format - placing it in even more homes.

015

"WITH ITS IN-BUILT DVD PLAYER AND EMOTION ENGINE CPU, PS2 WAS A REVOLUTION."





## GRAND THEFT AUTO III, GRAN TURISMO 3, REZ & SCREEN ENVY

**S**o this was the year that both Microsoft and Nintendo bravely joined the sixth console generation fray with launches of both the original Xbox and GameCube – but 2001 was still very much the year of PlayStation 2.

With supply of the console thankfully more plentiful, we were treated to the joys of Gran Turismo 3, Silent Hill 2 and the legendary Ico. Also, a game set in a parody New York might have made some headlines as it exploded onto PS2 in October. Grand Theft Auto III became the year's best-selling game as the series dropped its top-down sensibilities and took to 3D for the first time, effortlessly and controversially changing the games landscape forever. GTA III went on to shift more than 17.33 million copies in its lifetime.

### HARDWARE TIMES

As Sega's poor Dreamcast was discontinued in the year of Sonic's tenth birthday – cheer up, pal, you get really long legs in 13 years – Sony continued world domination, snapping up Crash Bandicoot developer Naughty Dog and transforming Wipeout developer Psygnosis into Studio Liverpool.

2001 was also the year of interesting peripherals as Japan was gifted the



'Special Pack' edition of music title Rez, which came with none other than a Trance Vibrator for you to, er, feel the music. It even came in a protective pouch. Wait. Oh never mind... Slightly less titillating, but still exciting if you wanted to take your

PSone in the car, was the release of an LCD screen to attach to your console.

We'll admit that it was probably cheaper to buy a Game Boy Advance, but if you were dedicated enough, the LCD display could be bought with an in-car charger to make sure you never missed a moment of GOTY contender Final Fantasy IX. Alternatively, we're pretty sure you could still play Snake on your Nokia 3310 at this point.



### Grand Theft Auto III

It must have been an arduous undertaking, bringing Grand Theft Auto into the third dimension, but it paid off handsomely. GTA III ushered in a new era of open-world 3D games, essentially saying to every other developer, "Come on, try and match this."



### Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

The first, full-fat PS2 GT was a revelation. Taking the realistic driving model and no-nonsense physics of its forebears, A-Spec added stellar graphics and a career mode that made every new car feel like a hard-earned treasure.



### Silent Hill 2

While the original had a more conventional story about a demonic cult, this sequel turned its focus inwards. In a city that mirrors your greatest fears, the only things tormenting our hero were his own traumatic thoughts (manifesting as hideous monsters).

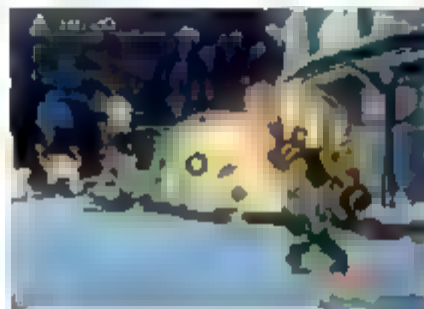




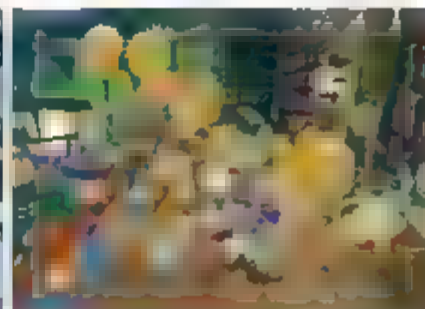
## RATCHET & CLANK, KINGDOM HEARTS, A CONNECTED FUTURE & LINUX?!

**A**s Xbox sneaked further across the world with releases in Japan, Europe and Australia, PS2 was well into the swing of things and concentrating on new games such as Ratchet & Clank, Sly Raccoon and the Disneyfied joys of the original Kingdom Hearts.

There was clearly something in the water at Sony as our favourite new series were born onto PlayStation 2 at an almost alarming rate and, to proudly confirm its dominance, Sony announced that 40 million PS2s had shipped worldwide by September 2002. A slew of alternative colours to the standard black one were also introduced – lemon yellow, anyone?



This was the year the cutesy platformer ruled on PS2 with Ratchet, Sly and Sora's Disney pals on fine form.



Despite most of us still needing that crunchy dial-up tone, the next step for console gaming was that new-fangled internet thingummy and Sony launched its PS2 Network Play service across North America in August before rolling out across the EU the following year. This required a

Network Adaptor, which came in two flavours: dial-up, and ethernet for those of us lucky enough to be connected to broadband. Suddenly it wasn't just PC gamers who could easily play online and, while it wasn't quite the PSN we now know, it was a key step in taking us into the digital frontier. Okay, maybe we've been watching too much Tron...

"SONY ANNOUNCED THAT 40 MILLION PLAYSTATION 2S HAD SHIPPED WORLDWIDE BY SEPTEMBER 2002."



### IN THE LINUX OF FIRE

And for those who had *definitely* been watching too much Tron was the little known Linux For PlayStation 2 Kit from Sony. Yes, that really was a thing – with a keyboard and mouse, 40GB HDD, a PS2 Network Adaptor and a Linux-based operating system, this was the best way to transform your ultimate gaming device into a, well, pretty mediocre PC that demanded an intimate knowledge of the Linux operating system to get it working. But it's the fact that you could if you wanted to, right?



#### Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Grand Theft Auto's obsession with wealth takes on a new meaning in the 80s-set Vice City, a decade best summarised by the Wall Street quote: "Greed is good." The soundtrack, obviously, was one of the series' best.

PUB: ROCKSTAR GAMES DEV: ROCKSTAR NORTH



#### Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty

Rather than trying to top the original Metal Gear Solid, Hideo Kojima turned it on its head. MGS2 famously replaced its grizzled hero Snake with an androgynous rookie named Raiden – but the mindgames didn't end there.

PUB: KONAMI DEV: KONAMI



#### TimeSplitters 2

This tongue-in-cheek TimeSplitters sequel was PS2's answer to GoldenEye – fitting, as developer Free Radical emerged from Rare. A time-hopping FPS with some of the best multiplayer around, we played a lot of its split-screen deathmatch.

PUB: EIDOS DEV: FREE RADICAL





## PSP ANNOUNCEMENT, EYE TOY LAUNCH & HUGE PS2 SALES

**T**his is the Walkman of the 21st century!" enthused Sony CEO Jose Villeta as PSP was revealed in a shock announcement at E3 2003. The perfect quote embodiment of how unaware the world was of Apple looming darkly on the horizon wearing nothing but a pair of white earbuds, it was an innocently confident statement.

Launched by Ken Kutaragi on-stage, PlayStation Portable would have a 4.5-inch screen (sending Nintendo and Nokia into waves of panic) and use an all-new technology known as Universal Media Discs – complete



Long before PS Move, there was EyeToy. Sure, you looked like a plum playing it, but it was one hell of a workout.

EyeToy camera and its accompanying EyeToy Play software. Plate-spinning, keepy-ups and Wishi Washi became the norm, and we can't be the only ones who ended up not being able to lift our morning coffee the day after

However, it was the first device to use the XMB UI and even featured software for video, image and audio editing, making it an interesting precursor to our multifaceted new generation box. We clearly weren't ready for such levels of usefulness or something that looked heavy enough to break the TV cabinet, so it's no surprise the poor old PSX never made it to Western homes.

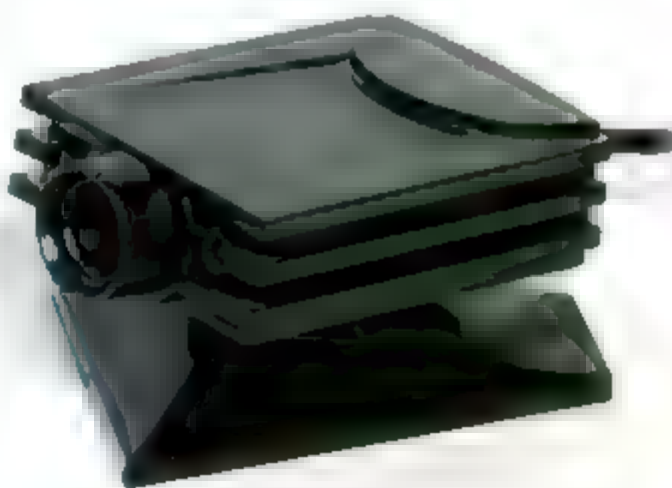
## "PSX WAS A PRECURSOR TO MODERN CONSOLES WITH ITS XMB UI AND VIDEO EDITING SOFTWARE."

with a menacing whirr every time you tried to play a game via this kooky new format. Concept images of PSP were revealed later in the year without an analogue stick, which duly sent the games press into a tizzy

Although we didn't get to clap eyes on the sleek little handheld console – with its token analogue nub restored – until the following year, we did get to look utterly ridiculous in our own living rooms with the release of the

an intense session of UFO Juggler. No? Just us? Yup, just us...

A massive five million PlayStation 2s were sold in the UK alone by December 2003 in the lead up to Christmas, so Sony was on a serious high. However, its PSX system was significantly less successful. Released only in Japan in December before being discontinued in 2005, this DVR meets PS2 was a commercial flop thanks to its high retail price.



### Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time

Time powers have been in everything from shooters to racing games, but they felt revitalising when The Sands Of Time rocked up. The sequel dropped the ball tonally, but the original shows how reboots should be done.

PUB UBISOFT DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL



### Viewtiful Joe

Cel-shaded beat-'em-up Viewtiful Joe might be Hideki Kamiya's weirdest game, and that's saying a lot about the director of Bayonetta. It stars a film-obsessed man named Joe, who enters Movieland to rescue his girlfriend. Then learns to bend time. Watch.

PUB CAPCOM DEV CLOVER STUDIO



### Amplitude

Before Harmonix had the idea of bundling their games with fake plastic instruments, they had the player control beat-matching spaceships in abstract, musical worlds. Amplitude was also the rocky sequel to the dancey Frequency, which landed in 2001.

PUB SONY DEV HARMONIX



2004

## GTA SAN ANDREAS, BURNOUT 3, PSP & GOD OF WAR REVEALED

**D**oesn't it feel like gaming magazines label every year the "best ever," in their end-of-year write-ups? Well, this was the year they meant it. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas was the year's biggest release, in more ways than one. Rockstar's Californian debut weighed in with a colossal world map almost 13 square miles in size, into which it packed three very different cities and framed them with acres of wide open space in which to lose yourself.

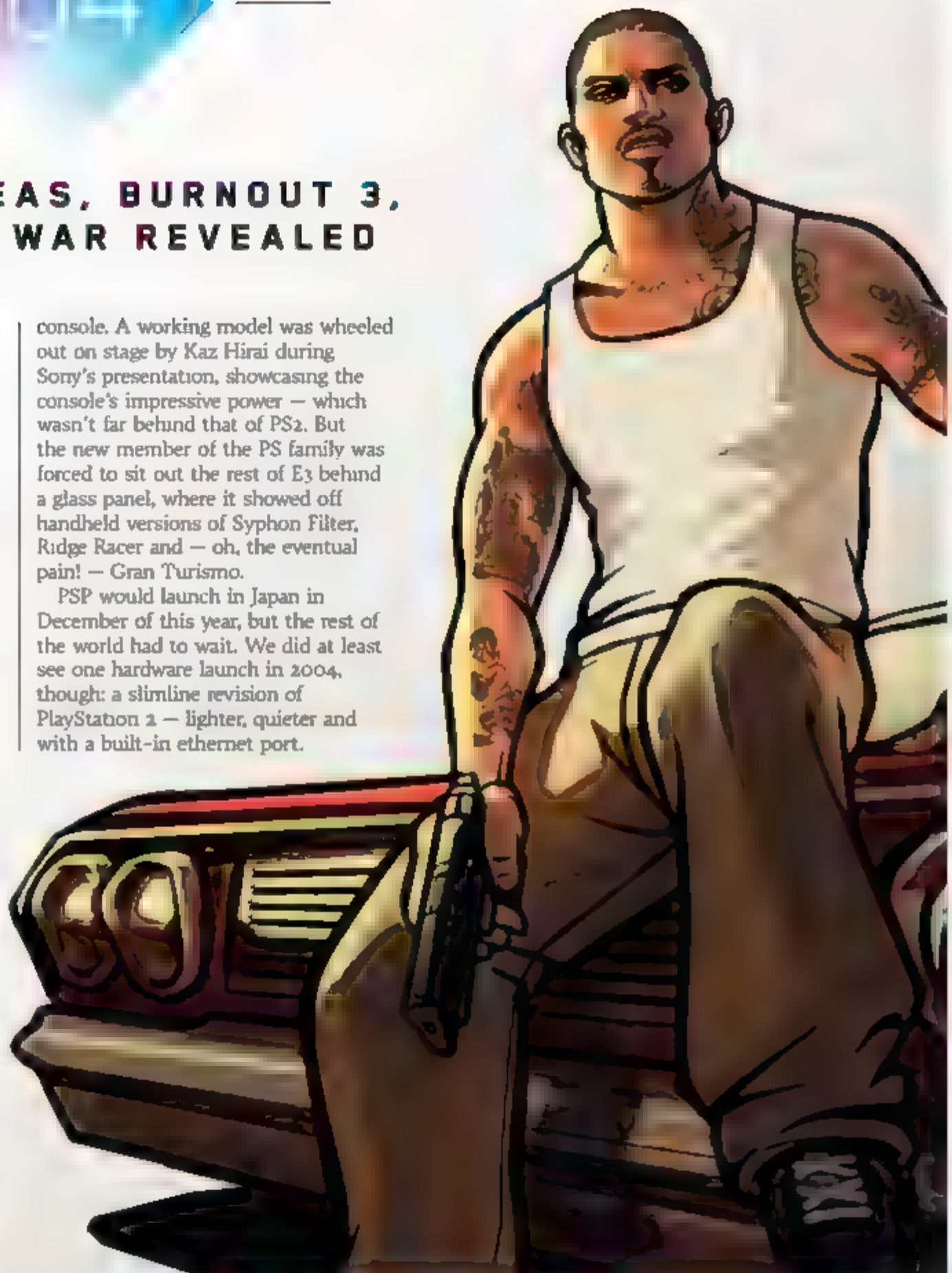
It also introduced numerous RPG elements, none more memorable than the ability to make CJ eat hamburgers until he vomited all over the shop. Although San Andreas is dwarfed by today's open-worlds, at the time such scale was unheard of on console.

Other big releases this year included MGS3 in the US (turn over for its UK glory) — a bold prequel that yanked the series out of dank bases and into the sunshine of the Russian jungle — and Burnout 3, an aggressive racer that cemented Criterion's reputation as king of all racers.

But despite this embarrassment of riches, gamers' eyes, as ever, drifted towards the future. Sony had a busy E3, showing glimpses of Gran Turismo 4 and God Of War, among others, but the biggest news coming out of the show was the unveiling of PlayStation Portable — Sony's first handheld

console. A working model was wheeled out on stage by Kaz Hirai during Sony's presentation, showcasing the console's impressive power — which wasn't far behind that of PS2. But the new member of the PS family was forced to sit out the rest of E3 behind a glass panel, where it showed off handheld versions of Syphon Filter, Ridge Racer and — oh, the eventual pain! — Gran Turismo.

PSP would launch in Japan in December of this year, but the rest of the world had to wait. We did at least see one hardware launch in 2004, though: a slimline revision of PlayStation 2 — lighter, quieter and with a built-in ethernet port.



### Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

In an effort to outdo their previous games, Rockstar somehow bundled three cities into San Andreas.

Certain systems, such as weight gain, wouldn't be repeated, giving this third entry a unique feel.

PUB ROCKSTAR GAMES DEV ROCKSTAR NORTH



### Burnout 3: Takedown

Car crashes, on the whole, are best avoided, but when the only things hurt are vehicles, it's fine to indulge in a bit of virtual rubbernecking.

New to Burnout 3 were the oh-so-moreish Takedowns, which rewarded you for smashing rivals mid-race.

PUB ELECTRONIC ARTS DEV ELECTRONIC ARTS



### Katamari Damacy

Okay, technically Keita Takahashi's physics playground didn't get a release in the UK (a fact we still lament to this day), but that didn't stop it from being one of the most simple yet devilishly addictive must-have imports of 2004.

PUB NAMCO DEV NAMCO





## PS3 REVEALED, PSP LAUNCHED, GOD OF WAR & RESIDENT EVIL 4 RELEASED

**O**n 16 May 2005, PlayStation 3 was unveiled, and we caught our first true glimpse of what the next generation was going to look like. Or did we? Sony's E3 2005 presentation proved to be one of the most controversial in the show's history, as almost-impossibly gorgeous gameplay footage of early PS3 titles such as Killzone 2, MotorStorm and Gran Turismo 5 sent jaws dropping so far through the floor they were walloping wallabies up the wazoo. When these titles eventually hit shop shelves in the years that followed, the reality was somewhat humbler.

The video reels, it transpired, were merely target render footage of what PS3 was ultimately capable of – not what we could expect to see appearing on the system in the first couple of years. Still, the trailers helped divert attention away from the fact that PS3 wouldn't launch until 2006 – giving the rival Xbox 360 a year's head start. But it couldn't divert attention away from that boomerang controller. Although, in retrospect, the curved batarang design makes a lot more sense now we know that it was intended to have built-in motion controls.

Nonetheless, PS3 captured the imagination, stealing a march on the



When Killzone 2 finally arrived it did look mighty fine, but it wasn't close to that pre-rendered trailer...

Xbox 360 in several vital areas. The prototype promised full backwards compatibility with all PS1 and PS2 games, had an HDMI port as standard, and would be the first console to use Blu-ray discs – an emerging format with a capacity far greater than the 360's standard-issue DVD discs.

Elsewhere in 2005, PlayStation Portable arrived on western shores,

first in North America (March) and fashionably late in Europe (September). The European launch line-up was impossibly strong, containing titles such as Ridge Racer, Lumines and Wipeout Pure. PSP would go on to have mixed fortunes, but the concept of a PS2-in-your-hands was an instant hit at launch, with a respectable 185,000 units shifted in the UK in the first week alone.

As for PS2-but-not-in-your-hands, 2005 was a surprisingly quiet year for Sony's stalwart system, punctuated with brief moments of glorious, glorious violence – such as Kratos' blood-drenched debut in the original God Of War, and a pleasingly faithful port of GameCube's best game, Resident Evil 4.



### Resident Evil 4

On his grand return to Resi, director Shinji Mikami threw out pretty much everything about it: the perspective, the horror focus and even the zombies. The result is one of the finest action games ever made, with no end of memorable set-pieces.

PUB LAPCOM DEV CAPCOM



### Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

Snake Eater (sort of) took Snake back in time, stripping the player of creature comforts and asking them to eat wildlife to survive. Some of Kojima's best work is here, including the tense sniper battle with The End.

PUB CAPCOM DEV KONAMI



### Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening

Knowing it dropped the ball with DMC2, Capcom had something to prove with Dante's Awakening. It deepened the combat with a platter of new weapons and fighting styles, resulting in the best game in the series.

PUB CAPCOM DEV CAPCOM

THE YEAR  
THE  
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021

"DESPITE A QUIET YEAR FOR PS2,  
THE STALWART BOX ADDED GOD OF  
WAR AND RESI 4 TO ITS ROSTER."

We were fully prepared  
to fling that boomerang  
controller out the door -  
but thought better of it.





## PLAYSTATION 3 DELAYS, RIIIIIDGE RACER, GIANT ENEMY CRABS & GUITAR HERO

**P**layStation 3 finally arrived – but later and dearer than anyone was expecting. On 15 March, Ken Kutaragi confirmed what had long been suspected: that PS3 had slipped from May to November.

Problems with the Blu-ray disc copy protection were blamed for the delay. And poor old Blu-ray was dragged over the coals yet again in September when the European date was pushed back into March 2007 – this time due to a shortage of blue laser diodes.

Still, that was just all the more time for us to save up for one. On the eve of E3 2006, Sony announced that PS3 would come with a price tag to match its technical heft – \$499 (around £340) for the 20GB model, and an eye-watering \$599 (£410) for the premium 60GB edition. The UK price

was later set at a princely £425. Cue Kevin Spacey, “Wrong!” meme.

Rocking up to the party late and sporting a price tag that would make Paris Hilton blush, the critics’ knives were out for PS3 at E3 2006. Every aspect of Sony’s presentation was aggressively mocked by internet onlookers – from Kaz Hirai’s excited announcement of ‘RIIIIIIDGE RACER!’ to the proclamation that PS3 exclusive Genji. Days Of The Blade would be based on actual Japanese history – moments before we saw the hero battle a giant crab. At least the new

**“THE UK PRICE FOR PLAYSTATION 3 WAS FINALLY SET AT £425.”**



LocoRoco, one of the oddest titles to hit Sony’s first handheld, tasked you with collecting multicoloured, cartoonish beasts.

Sixaxis pad jetisoned the banana-shape for a more traditional design, and added motion controls to boot.

Still! PlayStation 3 did finally find its ways into shops this year – launching in Japan on 11 November and the US a week later on 17 November. The launch line-up was weak, spearheaded by Resistance: Fall Of Man and, um, not a lot else of note. But PlayStation 2 and PSP were kept well-fed at least. Guitar Hero blazed onto PAL PS2 consoles in April, following its surprise success in the US the previous year, while PSP owners were treated to original oddities such as LocoRoco (still the happiest game we’ve ever played). It was a reminder that, despite the internet bile, Sony had much to smile about as they prepared for a big 2007



### Shadow Of The Colossus

At a time when others were thinking of ways to cram more into games, Fumito Ueda wanted less. Each of the soaring, emotive boss fights is bookended by a lonely trek, giving you time to think about what you’ve done.

PUB: SONY DEV: TEAM ICO



### Hitman: Blood Money

Let’s forget Absolution and remember the brilliant Blood Money, a sandbox murder sim with an unparalleled amount of player choice. You can off your targets in a variety of ways, using disguises, elaborate accidents and plain old violence as you see fit.

PUB: SONY DEV: IO INTERACTIVE



### Kingdom Hearts II

Once again melding the worlds of Final Fantasy and Disney, KH II was exactly what we all wanted – the same third-person brawling and platforming tweaked to perfection. New features such as Drive Forms made the team-based combat extra rewarding.

PUB: SQUARE ENIX DEV: SQUARE ENIX





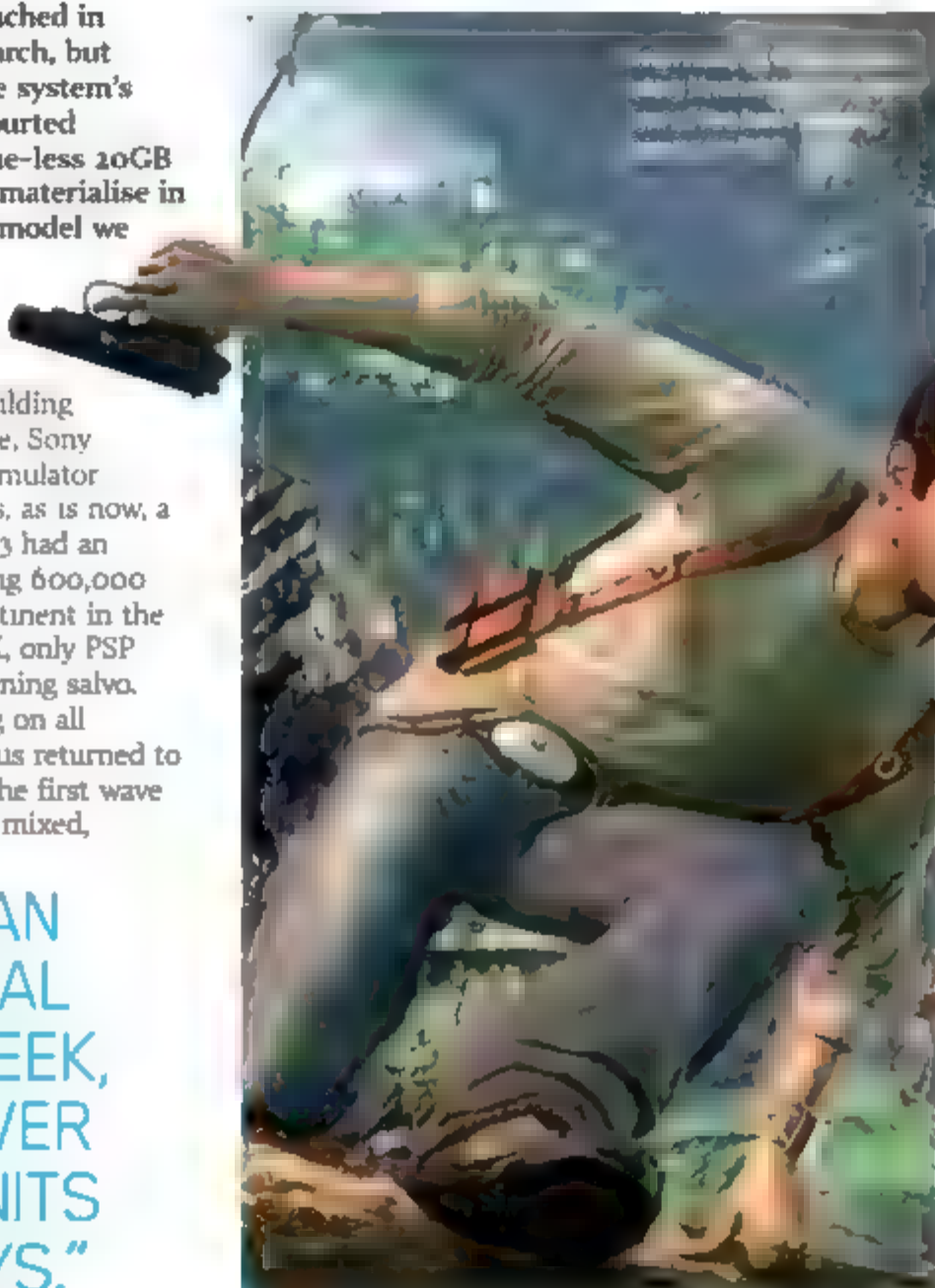
## PS3 LAUNCHES, BURNOUT PARADISE, UNCHARTED & HARDWARE REVISIONS

**P**layStation 3 launched in Europe on 23 March, but it wasn't just the system's tardiness that courted controversy. The chrome-less 20GB budget model failed to materialise in the UK, and the 60GB model we *did* get ditched the full PS2 backwards compatibility featured in US/Japan units.

Instead of basically building a PS2 inside each console, Sony packaged in a software emulator. Nevertheless Europe was, as is now, a Sony stronghold, and PS3 had an exceptional launch, selling 600,000 machines across the continent in the first two days. In the UK, only PSP had enjoyed a better opening salvo.

With PS3 finally firing on all cylinders, everyone's focus returned to the games. Reaction to the first wave of third-party titles was mixed,

**"PS3 HAD AN EXCEPTIONAL LAUNCH WEEK, SELLING OVER 600,000 UNITS IN TWO DAYS."**



however. Thanks to agreements in place between Sony and third-party publishers, all titles released first on Xbox 360 would come with extra content on PS3 to compensate – but the complexity of PS3's Cell architecture meant that it would take a year or two for parity between the two consoles to be established. 2008's *Burnout Paradise* would become the first multi-format game to run best on PS3.

The antidote was something that would rapidly nudge PS3 back into contention – a stellar line-up of exclusives built around PS3's strengths. And of Sony's fleet of first and second-party developers, none proved more valuable than Naughty Dog, whose first PS3 effort, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, wowed fans upon release in November.

Still, Sony wasn't finished with its hardware tinkering. The original models were phased out in favour of a 40GB and 80GB models, which binned PS2 support entirely. On the plus side, it meant price drops for the old stock. PSP also saw its first hardware revision – PSP-2000, or PSP Slim & Lite. Released in September, it was lighter and brighter than the original, and remains the definitive PSP model. And at the Tokyo Game Show, we saw a 'shocking' return. Over to you, 2008...



### 1 **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare**

We were all thoroughly sick of World War 2 games by '07, so *Modern Warfare* was a breath of fresh air.

It remains one of the best CODs, with an ace story and multiplayer that introduced the now-ubiquitous levelling system.

PUB: ACTIVISION DEV: INFINITY WARD



### 2 **God Of War II**

GOW ended with Kratos becoming the new God Of War (spoiler!) – so where the hell do you go from there?

Well, to Hell, actually (well, technically the Underworld). Adding even more complexity to its deep combat system, GOW II was a last hurrah for PS2.

PUB: SONY DEV: SCE SANTA MONICA



### 3 **Okami**

A Japanese fable in videogame form, *Okami* followed the plight of Amaterasu, a god trying to save the world from an ancient evil.

This was easier said than done, given that Ammy took the form of an oh-so cuddly, Daz-white wolf.

PUB: CAPCOM DEV: CLOVER STUDIOS





## DUALSHOCK 3, TROPHIES, METAL GEAR SOLID 4 & LITTLEBIGPLANET

This was the year Sony got its buzz back — and we're not just talking about the cracking line-up of games released during 2008 (more on those later). Nope, we're talking about a buzz of a more literal kind — the gentle hum of a controller that's warning you that your sports car is veering off into the weeds, or that someone is pumping an entire rifle clip into your sorry little face.

We're talking 'haptic feedback', or, in English, vibrating controllers, and the



Over-indulgent two-hour cutscenes aside, MGS4 remains one of PlayStation's most engaging and memorable experiences.

## "FIRMWARE UPDATE 2.40 DELIVERED IN GAME XMB SUPPORT AND INTRODUCED THE TROPHY SYSTEM."

news that Sony had resolved its patent infringement dispute with the Google-owned Immersion Corporation in March 2007 paved the way for the tech to debut on PS3. And so in July, the Sixaxis' replacement arrived in the form of DualShock 3 — essentially the same controller, but with the famous vibration motors restored. Rumble support



was retrospectively patched in to older PS3 titles such as MotorStorm, suggesting Sony was always confident the issue would work itself out.

### PATCH ADAMS

Speaking of patches, it turned out that PlayStation 3 hardware could be updated just as easily as its software, and we got our first significant glimpse of how exciting an evolving platform could be

when Firmware update 2.40 delivered in-game XMB support, and Trophies — Sony's answer to Xbox 360's in-vogue, dangerously life-sucking Achievements system.

PSP also evolved this year, although some might contend not necessarily for the better. At Gamescom 2008, Sony unveiled the third PSP in four years — the PSP-3000. A minor upgrade over the PSP-2000, it came with a built-in microphone for online gaming or Skype, and a brighter LCD screen. It also had a faster refresh rate to counteract the PSP-2000's ghosting issues, but the trade-off came in the form of visible scanlines and jaggy graphics, which had some scurrying back to their PSP-2000s.

Anything else? Oh yes, the games! So. Many. Great. Games. PS3 enjoyed a break-out year in 2008, with Resistance 2, Metal Gear Solid 4, Guns Of The Patriots and LittleBigPlanet headlining a killer list of PS3 exclusives. Meanwhile, PSP's highlights hinted at the direction portable gaming was going to take — away from scaled-down adaptations of full console games and towards quirkier offerings such as Patapon and Super Stardust Portable.

THE  
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BOOMED



**Metal Gear Solid 4:  
Guns Of The Patriots**  
Love it or hate it, this is Kojima at his most Kojima. The cutscenes might last

(chronologically) wrap up this beautifully mad series than with twist after twist after twist? What a ride

PUB EA DEV EA REDWOOD SHORES



### Dead Space

The sequels are less scary and more action-heavy, but the original remains a great sci-horror with echoes of Resident Evil 4. It's a wonderfully immersive game; holomenus and cavernous sound design firmly trapping you inside its sci-fi hell.

PUB EA DEV EA REDWOOD SHORES



### Bioshock

This spiritual sequel to System Shock proved that first-person shooters can be intelligent, too. The game's a comment on player agency, a deconstruction of Objectivism, but also a solid shooter with a soggy setting and captivating narrative

PUB TAKE-TWO DEV 2K/DIGITAL EXTREMES

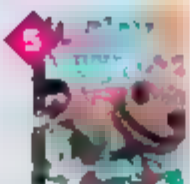




#### Rock Band

After Guitar Hero revolutionised air guitar, Harmonix decided to simulate an entire band. To unleash the full potential of this incredible party game, you needed four pricey instruments and three moderately tipsy friends. Rock on!

PUB EA DEV HARMONIX



#### LittleBigPlanet

LittleBigPlanet's creation tools are some of the best, and simplest, the industry has ever seen. You lot made some hugely creative, complex and hilarious stages with it, and then you did it all again for the next two full-fat installments.

PUB SONY DEV SONY



#### Fallout 3

Many prefer its follow-up New Vegas, which better captured the dark wit of the original games, but Bethesda's open-world apocalypse is a rambler's dream. It rewarded exploration while offering a combat system with a turn-based twist.

PUB BETHESDA DEV BETHESDA





PLAYSTATION MOVE  
PSP GO | THE SLIM

**T**his year saw PlayStation 3 outsell Xbox 360 for the first time – raking in an impressive 13 million sales worldwide compared to 360's 10.1 million. By this point in the game, however, it was clear that Sony and Microsoft were squabbling over the generation's leftovers.

Despite its lack of grunt (it was barely more powerful than PS2), Nintendo's Wii console had established a commanding lead over the competition, shifting over 21 million units in 2009 alone. While traditional gaming audiences shunned Wii, the diminutive console with the glowing blue mouth opened up our hobby to new demographics, thanks to its innovative motion controller, which made everything from playing tennis

## THE WORLD WASN'T READY FOR PSP GO'S DOWNLOAD-ONLY FORMAT, OR ITS PRICE.

to slicing skulls easy for any member of the family (even the little ones).

Sony fancied a bit of that mainstream success. And so, as widely speculated, the hardware giant revealed its own motion controller for

PS3, PlayStation Move, at E3 2009. Move's eventual fate is a story for another year, so let us just say this for now: Move was, and is, a seriously impressive piece of technology.

## HARDWARE TIMES

Rather than being a slapdash answer to the Wii motion controller, Move had actually been in development since 2000, and was, from a technological standpoint, light-years ahead of Wii's version. Move's most prominent physical feature was a positively indecent looking glowing orb situated on the controller's tip, which could be tracked by the PlayStation Eye camera, allowing for three-dimensional motion controls. Additionally, the Eye would scan the colours in the room the system was located in and transmit this data to your Move controller, enabling it to select an orb colour that wouldn't clash with your curtains. Fashionable!

Also fashionable in 2009: portable gaming. Just before E3, Sony announced its most dramatic PSP redesign yet – PSP Go. Released in October, it ditched the clunky UMD format in favour of 16GB of internal memory. It was a cool bit of kit, but the world wasn't ready for download-only, nor was it ready for its £225 price tag. A new slimline PS3 with a fresh logo was revealed at Gamescom, and was far more warmly received.

THE  
YEAR'S  
TOP  
THREE  
GAMES



### 1 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Drake's second outing was more assured, more ambitious, and somehow even more beautiful than his first. It gave us standout moments (oh, that dangling train opener), and remains the peak of this excellent series.

PUB: SONY DEV: NAUGHTY DOG



### 2 Batman: Arkham Asylum

This licensed game from an unproven studio shouldn't have been good – but it was exceptional. With a deep love and understanding for the Caped Crusader, Rocksteady crafted one of the best combat systems ever.

PUB: SQUARE ENIX DEV: ROCKSTEADY



### 3 Assassin's Creed II

The original had a great foundation, but it had its limitations. This epic sequel expanded its systems and smoothed its rough edges, all while introducing a beautiful new setting and the best protagonist the series has ever known.

PUB: UBISOFT DEV: UBISOFT MONTREAL





## PLAYSTATION MOVE LAUNCHES, 3D GAMING & PLAYSTATION PLUS

**N**ew decade, new ways to play; that was the theme of 2010. Much of Sony's attention this year focused on PlayStation Move, its September launch being treated with all the pomp and pageantry of a brand new hardware launch.

But despite a high-profile link-up with Coca-Cola and a prominent push at E3 2010 (Sony even went as far as to wheel freshly-disgraced star Tiger Woods out on stage for a round of pretend-golf), Move was lumbered with a historically uninspired launch line-up, consisting of nonentities such as Sports Champions, Kung Fu Rider and Start The Party! (Their exclamation mark, not ours.)

Sales in Europe were steady enough (1.5 million units shifted in the first month alone), but publishers were loath to finance games for a peripheral owned by a small splinter of the PS3 market, and so the killer app for PlayStation Move never came. The controller slowly spiralled into obscurity over the course of the next few years, but Sony worldwide president Shuhei Yoshida recently revealed that motion controls



Drawing from its experiences with EyeToy on PlayStation 2, Sony had high hopes for PlayStation Move...

would become relevant again when Sony's Project Morpheus virtual reality headset hits the market in 2016.

3D gaming was another hotly-tipped vision of the future. At E3, Sony proudly showed off a 3D demo of Killzone 3, a game which had been



Sony's attempts to kickstart the movement by offering a cut-price Bravia 3DTV with four free games, the buzz soon fizzled out.

It's funny to think that of all the Sony announcements at a busy E3 2010, the one that ended up offering

**"THE ANNOUNCEMENT WITH THE MOST LASTING IMPACT WAS ALSO THE MOST UNHERALDED - PLAYSTATION PLUS."**

"built from the ground up," with 3D viewing in mind. Considering we were just six months removed from the cinematic release of 3D posterchild Avatar, it's no surprise that the mind-blowing demonstration captured imaginations at the show. Alas, 3D gaming proved to be a fad, and despite

the most lasting impact was also one of the most unheralded - the launch of the PlayStation Plus service. A premium subscription service that offered a rotating buffet of free games and store discounts to its members, it was largely scoffed at when it was launched in June, but quickly established itself as an essential purchase for PlayStation owners.

## THE YEAR'S TOP THREE GAMES



### Red Dead Redemption

This could have just been GTA: Wild West and it would have done the business, but instead it's a subtler story about the decline of the Old West, and how it's not always so easy to escape your past. An instant classic.

PUB: ROCKSTAR GAMES DEV: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO



### Super Street Fighter IV

Building on the rousing success of 2008's SFIV, the reigned update was more than just an increase in the roster. A series of tweaks based on fan feedback rebalanced the fighting, as did some welcome extra online modes.

PUB: CAPCOM DEV: CAPCOM/DUMPS



### Heavy Rain

David Cage continues to fly the flag for interactive bonkers cinematic stories, and the world would be a far duller place without him. Heavy Rain was a collection of thrilling and engaging moments that introduced the world to "JASON!"

PUB: SONY DEV: QUANTIC DREAM

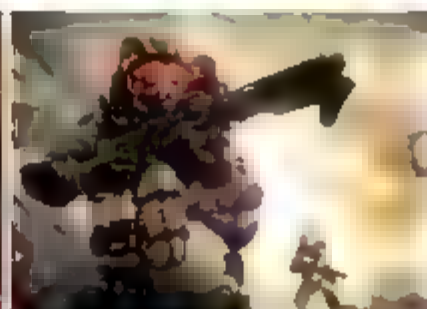
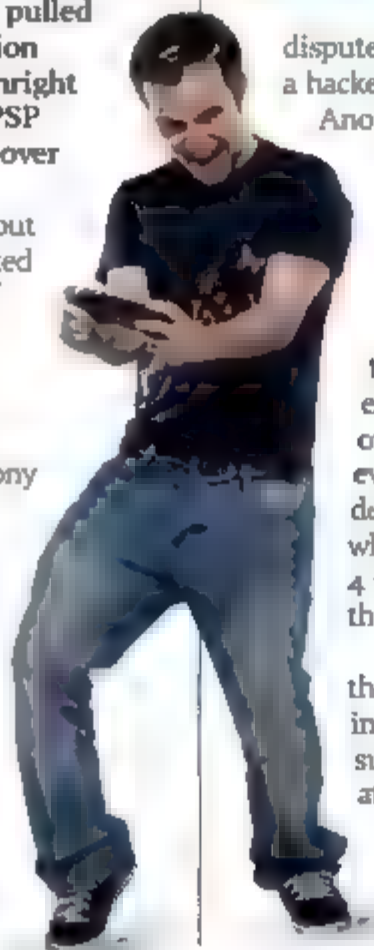


## THREEQUELS, PSN DOWNTIME & PS VITA REVEALED

**B**y now, PlayStation 3's list of exclusives was beginning to look far more compelling than that of rival Xbox 360 – Uncharted 3, Killzone 3 and Resistance 3 all proving that good things come in (or are suffixed by) threes. But any hopes Sony had of a quiet year where the games did the talking came crashing to a halt on 20 April, when someone pulled the plug on the PlayStation Network, making it downright impossible for PS3 and PSP owners to get online for over three weeks. It hurt.

That 'someone' turned out to be hackers, who exploited a security flaw in the PSN infrastructure (potentially compromising personal information from over 77 million PSN accounts in the process) and forced Sony to lock down its systems until they were fixed.

Although it was never comprehensively confirmed who was behind the attacks, Sony strongly suspected the hacking group Anonymous, who had recently been behind a series of attacks on Sony websites, in retaliation to a legal



Sure, there were lots of sequels going about, but that didn't mean a drop in quality. Uncharted 3 was incredible.

dispute between Sony and a hacker who jailbroke PS3.

Anonymous, however, denied involvement, claiming that attacking PSN would needlessly punish innocent PlayStation gamers. Regardless of who was to blame for the hack, the entire episode was an expensive and embarrassing one for Sony, and may have even indirectly led to the demise of Zipper Interactive, whose online-reliant SOCOM 4 was released the same day the outage began.

Sony, to its credit, handled the situation remarkably well in the aftermath, offering a suitably contrite apology at E3 2011. Affected users received 30 days of PlayStation Plus access and a stack of free games as compensation.

With that ugliness behind it, Sony could focus on showcasing Next-Gen Portable (NGP). Announced in January and later renamed and revealed as PlayStation Vita, it was a slinky machine that superficially resembled PSP but featured a raft of subtle design fixes. Gone was PSP's coarse,

**"SONY, TO ITS CREDIT, HANDLED THE PSN DOWNTIME WELL WITH LOTS OF FREE GAMES."**

fingerprint-destroying 'nub', in favour of more conventional twin analogue sticks. And as for popular touchscreens? Vita gave us that, and then threw in a snazzy rear touchpad too, just because it could. It launched in Japan in December 2011. But it's over to 2012 for us Europeans.



### 1 Mass Effect 2

The first of the series to hit PS3 toned down the numbers, improved the combat and focused more on story. It was an essential PS3 buy despite the missing first chapter. Where's Skyrim, you ask? Blame Bethesda's shameful launch bugs.

PUB EA DEV BOWARE



### 2 Dark Souls

FromSoft's spiritual sequel to Demon's Souls is a modern-day classic with unwavering attention to detail in its world design, and some of the best combat an RPG has ever seen. Conquering Dark Souls is a challenge – and one you won't forget.

PUB NAMCO BANDAI DEV FROM SOFTWARE



### 3 Portal 2

Portal 2 was everything we could hope for from a sequel. The puzzling was expanded in clever ways, while its story was bigger and funnier thanks to a laugh-out-loud script and winning voice-acting from the likes of Stephen Merchant.

PUB EA DEV VALVE





## PLAYSTATION VITA RELEASED & PS3 NEARING RETIREMENT

**P**layStation Vita ("it's Latin for life," every news outlet reminded us at the time) officially launched in the United Kingdom on 22 February, in what could charitably be described a veritable baptism of fire.

The hardware itself met with rave reviews, and the line-up of games was undeniably strong — 30+ games were available at launch, including *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, *WipEout 2048*, *Rayman Origins* and *Lumines: Electronic Symphony*. These titles threw weight behind Vita's boast that it was capable of packing PS3-calibre games into a piece of curvy hardware the size of a cow's tongue, but there was trouble in paradise.

Circumstances were conspiring against PS Vita, which launched at the very height of the iOS gaming craze — the public had warmed to the idea of paying 59p for portable games and Vita's premium priced titles looked heavy on the wallet in comparison. It didn't help that the initial monsoon of titles quickly dried up and the rest of 2012 saw a software drought, while the price of the system itself was steep

— £229 for the base model and £279 for the 3G-enabled version, plus the price of a small mortgage for the memory cards to add on top of that outlay.

Combined, these factors saw punters approach PS Vita with caution, and launch sales in the UK stood at a disappointing 45k

— well down from PSP's 185k. Vita would go on to find relevance by moving away from boxed premium titles and embracing digital downloads, but that's a story for later on down the road.

Like dogs trembling before earthquakes strike, new handhelds are usually a sign that a new wave of consoles are on the horizon — and the announcement of a *LittleBigPlanet Karting* game only furthered speculation that PS3 was nearing the end of its life. Sony began PS3's winding down process in September by announcing a new budget 'Super Slim' model, which took the console under the £200 mark for the first time in its history. It wasn't as universally popular as the 2009 revision however; the top-loading disc tray no match for the old slot.



While PS Vita would struggle against the mobile gaming market, it would eventually get a second breath of life thanks to some bespoke titles (such as *Tearaway*) and a PS Plus library stuffed with its biggest hits.



### Journey

We've played with thousands of other people online, but rarely have we felt this much of a connection with another soul. Journey made players anonymous, transforming everyone into iconic scarf-people on a charming adventure

PUB SONY DEV THATGAMECOMPANY



### Dishonored

Arkane Studios built on its experience with first-person melee combat and nailed the formula to the wall with the steampunk-themed Dishonored. It's a game of stealth and murder, mixing Hitman, Deus Ex and Thief. An utterly brilliant experience

PUB BETHESDA DEV ARKANE STUDIOS



### The Walking Dead

Has it really only been three years since Telltale revitalised adventure games with TWD? You can hardly accuse it of resting on its laurels since. This narratively rich series boldly downplayed puzzles and exploration for story and choice

PUB TELLTALE GAMES DEV TELLTALE GAMES



## PLAYSTATION 4 LAUNCHES, SHARING 6 RECORD BREAKING SALES

**A**lthough PlayStation 3 rebounded from its poor start, it was never able to establish market dominance like PS1 and PS2 did back in the day. PlayStation 4 on the other hand established itself as boss before we even knew what it looked like.

Doubly impressive, when you consider we first thing we saw running on the thing was Knack. Ropey platformers aside, PS4's announcement event in New York on 20 February was clean, clear and hinted at the ways PS4 would enhance our gaming experiences beyond increasing the grunt power. Its improved interface would enable players to upload gameplay footage,



Following months of palpable hype, PS4 broke retail records and became a must-have item that Christmas.



truth be told, it was Microsoft's insistence of scoring own goal after own goal that saw Sony storm into a commanding lead before the gen could even begin. The US giant hoped to build on the inroads Xbox 360 has

indie scene, to the price itself, inflated by the mandatory Kinect add-on.

Smelling blood, Sony went straight for the throat at its E3 presentation, devastating its waning opponents with takedown after takedown. "You can trade in your games at a store," Sony president Jack Tretton announced "No online check-in requirement here," he said. "Oh, by the way, have you seen our burgeoning indie scene?" PlayStation 4 even looked better than its opposition, its sleek, slanted shape making it look like art compared with the VCR-like Xbox One.

Tretton would go on to declare PS4 a great redemption story, and its success was instant. The system went on sale on 29 November in the UK and shifted an astonishing 250,000 units in just 48 hours – more than PSP or PS3 could manage. Xbox One, meanwhile, plodded along with a paltry 150,000 to its name

**"LAUNCHING ON 29 NOVEMBER  
2013, PS4 SHIFTED AN ASTONISHING  
250,000 UNITS IN JUST 48 HOURS."**

play games while updates installed themselves in the background, and suspend playing sessions for later – all innovations that made PS3's XMB interface look really dated.

PS4's Feb announcement was crisp and professional but,



made in the market, but instead squandered a decade's hard work with a selection box of consumer-hostile decisions – from the requirement for the console to always be online, to an inability to trade in used games, to the lack of an



### **The Last Of Us**

Naughty Dog followed up its relatively lighthearted Uncharted series with this bleak action game set after the apocalypse. It's a subtler game, but one with its own share of blockbusting moments and a story that lands an emotional gut-punch.

PUB SONY DEV NAUGHTY DOG



### **Grand Theft Auto V**

The fifth numbered GTA brought back some of the silliness lacking from GTA IV in a crime caper featuring no fewer than three main characters. The game's huge open-world can be played online, too – a mode filled with co-op races and heists.

PUB ROCKSTAR GAMES DEV ROCKSTAR NORTH



### **Bioshock Infinite**

Its development was troubled, but the end result is another sumptuous FPS set in a fantastical alternate world. Or worlds, we should say – Infinite's story is mindbendingly brilliant, shunting you from one magical universe to the next

PUB 2K GAMES DEV IRRATIONAL GAMES

THE  
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THE  
BEST  
GAMES





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"SMELLING BLOOD, SONY WENT STRAIGHT FOR THE THROAT DURING ITS E3 PRESENTATION IN 2013."

PS4 is all about change – including a much-needed update to the classic DualShock design.



## PS VITA GOES INDIE, REMOTE PLAY & PROJECT MORPHEUS

**W**oah — we got so completely caught up in PS4's launch, that we completely forgot to talk about PS Vita's 2013! To quickly recap: after the disappointing news in February that the PS Vita's sales figures were well below Sony's forecast of ten million, many industry insiders were quick to declare Vita dead in the water.

Sony had other plans however, and began Project re-Vitalisation by slashing the console's price and shifting development focus away from big-budget triple-A games and towards its thriving indie scene. PS Vita was also able to piggy-back on PS4's success thanks to the Remote Play feature, which enabled PS4 owners to stream their current-gen games to their Vita, allowing you to play games such as *Destiny* away from your TV.

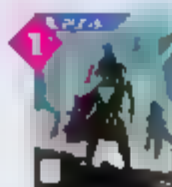
As part of the refresh, Sony announced a slimmer and lighter Vita model in January 2014. Released in the UK on 7 February, PS Vita Slim boasted a trim price tag to match its form factor — it cost £180, which represented even better value for money once you factored in its 1GB of internal memory. It also

had a slightly better battery life, although this came at a cost — PS Vita Slim's LED display was slightly dimmer than PS Vita Fatboy's OLED screen. Having said that, both consoles boast ridiculously bright displays, so we're hardly talking massive levels of sacrifice here.

### MIGHTY MORPHEUS

The year 2014 also saw Sony unveil arguably its most ambitious hardware yet — Project Morpheus. The virtual reality headset was revealed at GDC and immediately grabbed your (and our) attention with its immersive potential and PS4 compatibility, plus promised a new lease of life for PS Move wands the world over.

If you fancied playing your PS4 games in bed, but wanted to play on the big screen, meanwhile, then 2014 had your back. The PS TV microconsole, released in November, enabled you to stream games onto a second TV screen while your PS4 whirrs away downstairs. And to close off a year in which PS4 continued to dominate? Sony celebrated with the first ever annual PlayStation Experience event for its fans, hosted in Las Vegas.



#### Destiny

Its story of moon-wizards and spinmetal might be tough to follow, but no one can fault the quality of Bungie's gunplay. Satisfying shooting meets compelling loot-gathering and daunting online challenges; we've been stuck in its feedback loop ever since.



#### Alien: Isolation

An old-fashioned horror that prioritises hiding and punishes mistakes, *Isolation* is a beautiful anachronism. It's also the most authentic Alien game ever made, recreating the look of the film in exquisite detail. In space, no one can hear you sob in a cupboard.



#### Dragon Age: Inquisition

A rushed development period and cramped urban location hobbled *Dragon Age 2*, so for this sequel Bioware blew us away. It's an enormous RPG that gives you control over a small army, harking back to the original story.

PUB EA DEV BOWARE

THE  
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## THE LAST GUARDIAN, SHENMUE 3, NEW COD PARTNERSHIP & FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

**O**n PlayStation's 20th anniversary, Sony stoked the flames and reignited the fires hot off an historic E3 victory. The Last Guardian's shock return from eight years in development limbo is one of those headline-grabbing announcements you still can't quite believe.

Almost a decade in absentia, it was feared Team Ico's successor to stone cold PS2 classics Ico and Shadow Of The Colossus was gone forever, but its return signals intent to continue delivering unique experiences.

And that's not all. The Shenmue series spent even longer out of the spotlight (14 years), but the long, long-awaited third instalment is back. A Final Fantasy VII remaster rounds off the triple threat of E3 surprises. Fans have spent years begging for them, and that they're actually happening indicates 2015 is the year

"THE LIKES OF UNTIL DAWN AND THE ORDER: 1886 SHOW SONY IS WILLING TO PUSH NEW BRANDS."



Sony stood firmly behind its PS4 slogan: This Is For The Players.

And the current releases? Bloodborne is an undoubted critical and commercial success, the revitalised incarnation of an all-time great in Dark Souls, and the likes of Until Dawn and The Order: 1886 show Sony's willing to throw weight behind new properties. And let's not forget a thriving indie scene featuring Rocket League, N++ and Titan Souls.

### THE FUTURE'S GREY

2015 is also the year Sony took it to Microsoft. With the news Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare sold 4.01 million copies on PS4 and only 2.61 million on Xbox One, it seized the chance to snatch up timed-exclusive DLC for the series. Alongside that, Destiny has continued to boast PS4-exclusive maps, Strikes, and gear. Fact: two of the biggest games in the world right now are best on PS4.

Sony's platform is stronger than ever, and sales figures back that up. As of March, PS4 has sold 22.3 million units, with a further 16 million expected before the year is out. Key strategies, such as a thriving PlayStation Plus service that dishes out excellent free games on a monthly basis, further defines the console. The year isn't yet over, but it isn't too early to declare it a massive success for PlayStation 4



### 1 Bloodborne

From Software invigorates the Dark Souls formula with a transfusion of aggressive new enemies, brutal transforming weaponry and even bloodier combat in a rich and captivating dark world. Hidetaka Miyazaki crafts another punishing masterpiece.

PUB SONY DEV FROM SOFTWARE



### 2 Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

The final hurrah for the celebrated series under the banner of Hideo Kojima, the split between developer and publisher dominated pre-release talk but the sublime sandbox stealth action means Koj has bowed out on a high.

PUB KONAMI DEV KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS



### 3 The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

Simply pulling off an open-world as massive as the Northern Realms without it blowing up your PS4 is a feat in itself, but filling it with engaging quests and stories is truly impressive. The White Wolf rides off in style.

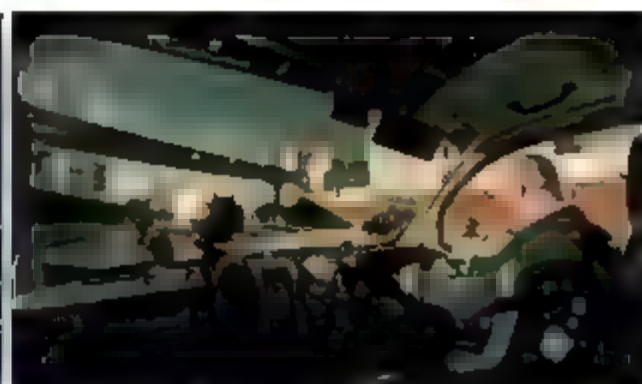
PUB BANDAI NAMCO DEV CD PROJEKT RED



## PROJECT MORPHEUS, UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END, HORIZON ZERO DAWN & STREET FIGHTER V

**V**irtual reality will find its de facto home on PS4 with Project Morpheus, the best way to experience a new gaming revolution. Sony's headset, exclusive to PS4, is the most immersive, most comfortable, and not to mention most aesthetically badass in a soon-to-be crowded market. Key selling points include a lovely 120Hz refresh rate and the ability to output another game feed to a TV for others to play along, too.

Of course, exciting new tech is nothing without titles, and Morpheus has over 30 in development. CCP Games' EVE: Valkyrie is a thrilling space-based dogfighter set in the sprawling universe of its massive PC



Both EVE: Valkyrie (above left) and The London Heist (above right) show Morpheus is more than a passing fad.

controlled by mates who can fight back with projectiles. Then there's bank shooter The London Heist, undersea exploration The Deep, and bomb-defusing multiplayer puzzler Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes

designing for it, and it bodes well for the headset's long-term future.

But Sony isn't forgetting about more traditional experiences, and it's proving it with a batch of irresistible exclusives. It continues a winning partnership with Naughty Dog in Uncharted 4 (check this month's cover feature for more), forges ahead with fresh concepts in Guerrilla's Horizon Zero Dawn, and pulls off a major coup in grabbing a genre-conquering phenomenon in Street Fighter V.

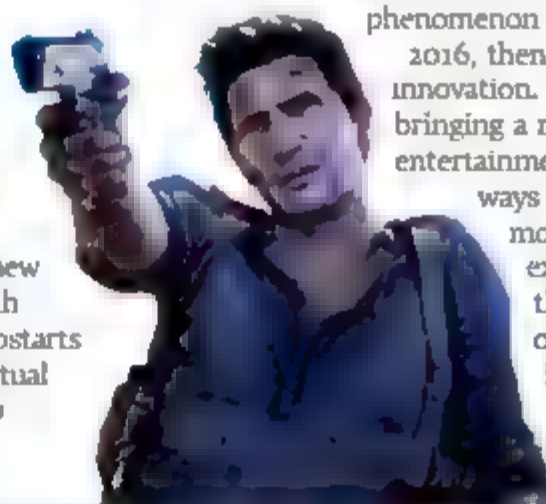
2016, then, will be a year of innovation. With Morpheus bringing a new wave of interactive entertainment — and offering new ways to play old games — as more system-selling exclusives roll in from the greatest developers on the planet, next year is shaping up to be PlayStation's best. ■

"KEY MORPHEUS SELLING POINTS INCLUDE A 120HZ REFRESH RATE AND SINGLE TV PROJECTION."

MMO, EVE Online. Here players strap into spacecraft cockpits and battle among space fleets and asteroid fields from first-person.

Playroom VR is more proof of concept: a unique multiplayer mini-game compilation that shows off what Morpheus can do. There's one in which the wearer becomes a dinosaur, headbutting little robots

Alongside new experiences are a slew of retrofitted ones. Project CARS, Thief and Surgeon Simulator shine in the new medium of virtual reality, with dozens more taking on a new lease of life. It's good to see both established studios and indie upstarts feel confident enough about virtual reality to throw themselves into



### 1 Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

An older, wiser, but no less wisecracking Nathan Drake stars in Naughty Dog's eagerly awaited new adventure, alongside a Troy Baker-voiced brother. Expect gobsmacking set-pieces and thigh-slapping zingers.

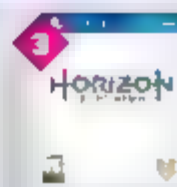
PUB: SONY DEV: NAUGHTY DOG



### 2 The Last Guardian

No, we can't quite believe it either, but The Last Guardian is real, and it's happening. It's everything we'd hoped for: a touching tale of a boy exploring ruins with his giant eagle-dog. With Fumito Ueda on board and Sony's backing, this could be epic.

PUB: SONY DEV: TIGER GAMES



### 3 Horizon Zero Dawn

1,000 years in the future, robotic dinosaurs rule the land. In this beautiful open-world you can hunt them with explosive arrows, anchor them using cables, pillage them for parts, or run away screaming. Dino hunting has never looked so good.

PUB: SONY DEV: GUERRILLA GAMES

2016  
PS4  
PS3  
PS Vita





Unlike other VR headsets in the works, Morpheus also looks great and is comfortable to use.

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"THANKS TO  
PROJECT MORPHEUS  
AND CO, 2016 WILL  
BE THE YEAR OF  
INNOVATION."



### Deus Ex: Mankind Divided

Unlike Human Revolution, you can play this more open sci-fi RPG as a true pacifist, non-lethally taking down bosses and knocking fools out clean. That new spike-launcher does look pretty appealing though.

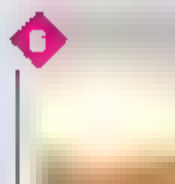
PUB SQUARE ENIX DEV EIDOS MONTREAL



### Street Fighter V

New to this genre-defining beat-'em-up is the ability to stun opponents who play too aggressively, a V-Gauge which fills to enable more attacks, and interactive stages. Oh, and consider this one: it's a PlayStation 4 console-exclusive. Forever.

PUB CAPCOM



### Mass Effect Andromeda

Bioware boldly rediscovers Mass Effect's fun streak after a dark and brooding final instalment. Andromeda kickstarts a new saga with fresh characters to mingle with and more scope to roam farther than ever.

PUB BLOOMBERG

# The Secrets Of PlayStation

What does it take to make PlayStation a dynasty? We cornered some of the world's biggest developers and asked them to share the secrets of their craft...





20TH ANNIVERSARY





MARK CERNY

Senior Vice President, Engineering, PlayStation

# What's the secret to building the greatest console in history?

**W**hat we tried to do with PS Vita was make sure that... oh, you mean PlayStation 4?

I know it sounds extremely basic but we made a great attempt to hear — directly from the game creators — what sort of console would really help them to create the games they were dreaming of making. I once said I'd talked to a few dozen teams. It turns out that was incorrect — I found my notes recently and the number was closer to fifty!

What they said was very surprising, at least to me. I'd expected to hear a lot about performance, and I did — but

what I [also] heard was, "Do not use exotic technologies as a way to increase the performance." The developers were looking for something conventional in many ways, with good performance, and good growth potential.

Certainly the choice of an x86 CPU and a PC GPU satisfied the need for familiarity and performance, but good growth potential... that was very tricky. We ended up modifying the GPU in a number of ways, principally to make 'compute' (also known as 'GPGPU') easier and more practical — by which I mean using the GPU to perform something other than traditional rendering

tasks. Our vision was that Day One titles might not make use of compute, but that by year three or four we'd see a lot of very interesting work in this area.

This overall strategy, of a familiar hardware with some forward looking features, seems to have turned out very well. The familiarity has brought us a rich library of titles, and the benefits of 'compute' are already being seen — Resogun made great use of it at launch, and most recently The Tomorrow Children uses 'compute' for its soft lighting and overall surreal look.

I can't wait to see what the future will bring here.







PS4's designer also  
created PS1 icons  
Crash Bandicoot and  
Spyro The Dragon.



PATRICK BACH

# What's the secret to making the perfect Star Wars game?

**T**hat's a good question. This is exactly what we're basing the Star Wars Battlefront project on. What's the secret? What is it that we want to achieve?

The brilliant thing when the relationship started with Lucasfilm was that they said to us, "We want to build the best Battlefront game that has ever been made, and the best Star Wars game that has ever been made. We know you know how to build shooters — how can we get this to work?" And we said, "We want the same thing, so what can we get from you? Open the doors."

If you want to recreate the battles from the original trilogy, and you get access to the actual content that those battles were built upon — the blasters, the

AT-AT walkers, the Stormtrooper armour, everything — the authenticity of the game will be super-high. That, coupled with the technology and the techniques we use, creates the fidelity that Star Wars stands for.

On top of that, of course, it needs to play great. If it doesn't play great, you'll say, "Oh, the picture's nice — great trailer," and move on. We want you to live and breathe this game like you live and breathe Star Wars. So it's super-important to get the [feel] right, [not only] from the second you hit the ground shooting or take flight, but also in terms of longevity, variation, progression and persistence. So it's a mix of the authenticity of Star Wars, the fantasy of the battle, the

technology that drives it, the techniques that drive it, and also the tie-in and connection to Lucasfilm and the connection to Star Wars Episode VII and the Battle Of Jakku.

To me, that creates this very nice circle that encompasses what it should be. Because we spend a lot of energy just trying to think, "Well, what is it?" It'd be easy to just take the shovel and put stuff in there without considering it carefully. But this is sacred ground. We can't barge into the Star Wars universe and say, "A-ha! We know what to do! Let's just take our old games, put spray-tan on them and call them Star Wars games!" I think that's disrespectful.





# What's the secret to...

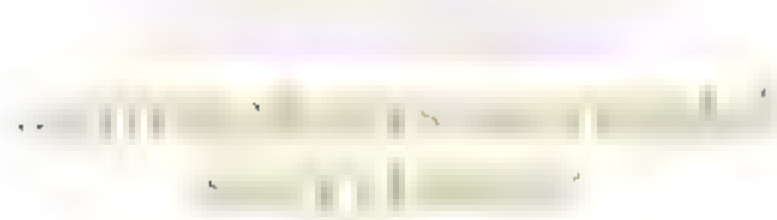
**JULIAN GERIGHTY**  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR



I think it's variety. Because making a big world by itself is fairly easy if it's going to be empty and boring; a desert. But being big is not what makes it interesting, it's the variety of the different terrain and then it's giving you the vehicles that allow you to explore those different environments.



**MARK DARRAH**



Really it's about dilemma more than choice. So if you just give me a choice where the answers are obvious – do you want to save a puppy or kick it across the room? – or if you give me a choice where the consequences have no meaning – like do you want chocolate or vanilla ice cream? – they're not dilemmas. It's really about feeling like both answers are plausible or possible, and both have consequences that you may not want to live with.



**GAVIN PRICE**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Pent-up passion for doing it. I've always loved these types of games, and I love that you can get slight variations, almost sub-genres, of them too: you can get so much variety in what you're doing in exploratory levels or scrolling levels. So high variety is [also] really key.



**MATT THORSON**  
TOWER OF GODS



Mind-games! Having lots of room to trick your friends and then trick people trying to trick you, and trick people who know that you're trying to trick them. That's what you need.



**RUPERT FRIEND**



There's so much involved in making a movie, let alone a videogame: directors and writers and production designers... and so only as far as I'm concerned, I don't think that gamers want to watch a film that is exactly a film of the game. I think that's what the game is for. I think the film should be an extension and an augmentation of a videogame world, not a literal depiction of it. We want to add to this world, we don't want to just keep doing the same thing over and over, so for me it's translate don't transliterate.



**JASON GRAVES**  
GAME COMPOSER



Find the emotional core of the game. Every title connects with players in a different way – strengthen that emotional connection through music as much as possible.



Check out the prologue  
in Detmar: Arden  
Knight for a cheeky  
Softon Hill cameo.





SEFTON HILL  
ROCKSTEADY GAMES CO-FOUNDER &  
BATMAN ARKHAM SERIES GAME DIRECTOR

# What's the secret to the perfect tie-in?

**O**bviously we have a tremendous amount of love for Batman and his universe, and I think that's the first thing we try never to forget.

We really want that to come across in the games that we make — how much we care about the games and how much we care about the universe — and that's a big part of it. I always say that that's not something you can really 'fake'. You can't really pretend for the amount of time and dedication that you need to put into game development.

There needs to be a genuine love for the thing that you're making for other people to feel that. So I guess that's the first thing: that passion and that dedication to what you're getting to work on. We always saw it —

and I still genuinely do see it — as a real privilege to get to work with this character that I've always loved, to work in this universe. That's a necessary ingredient. It's very hard to make something that has that kind of love and attention if you don't really believe that when you're making it.

We also really have the feeling that we're never satisfied with anything that we make. We're



Hill and the rest of Rocksteady have worked on Batman for almost a decade.

always thinking, and we constantly question how can it be better. We don't try and use any established mechanics to solve our games — it's about trying to create new ways, new mechanics and new things that we think really represent Batman more fundamentally than trying to shoehorn just any mechanic into Bats or into a licensed character.

I like to think that — obviously it's something other people can judge — if you took Batman out of the game, that people would still love it. But at the same time, if you took Batman out of the game and gave it to someone and said, "Guess who this is a game of?" that they would still immediately know because the mechanics speak to who the character is so directly. That's always our goal.

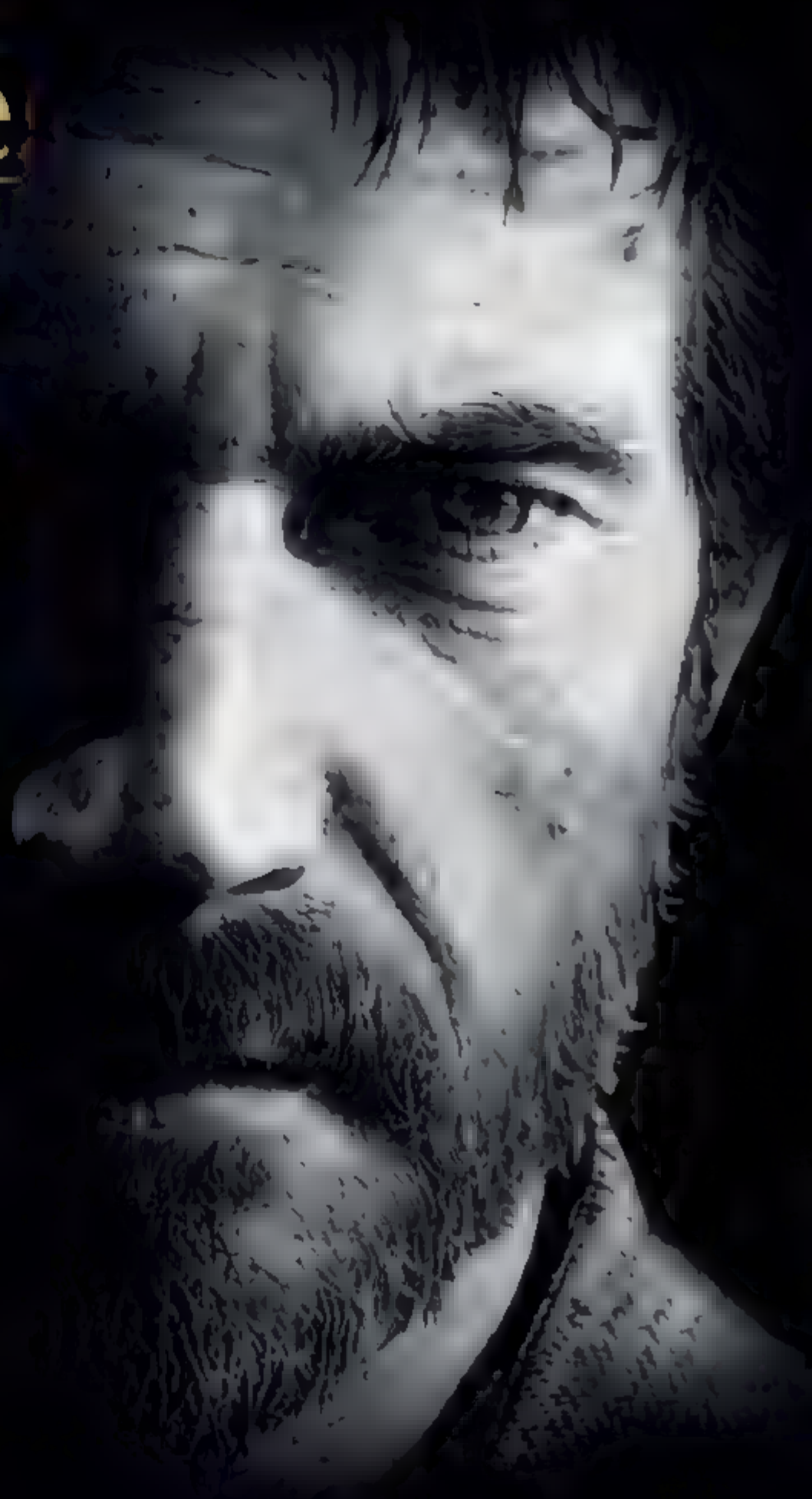


TROY BAKER  
VOICE ACTOR

# What's the secret to creating a character with just a voice?

At the end of the day it's all about the acting. Whatever mechanic you're using, whether it's the voice or, with performance capture, everything: the body, the face, the voice, you're having to overcome a lot.

Normally your wardrobe and the makeup, the hair, etc., gets you into that character, but performance capture actually plays against that. You're in the most ridiculous suit you can possibly imagine and you've got cameras in your face. So all of those mechanics that normally aid you are working against you, and you have to overcome those things. So I think there's no trick to it other than understanding where that character is, and you have to have a really amazing imagination because this is all theatre of the mind.



Baker's first major game role was the lead part in 2005's *Brothers in Arms: Road To Hill 30*.



# What's the secret to...

RU WEERASURIYA

## ...a killer game engine?

People. That's it. Many people talk about systems: what this system does, and what that system does. Systems can be rebuilt from the ground up. The thing that you can't rebuild is people. A lot of the senior guys [at Ready At Dawn] have known each other for ten years. That's how you become who you are; ideas germinate because you hear somebody else say something. The secret for us was really to let these guys do what they do best and telling everybody, "We're gonna go all out, we're just gonna do whatever we want, no holds barred. If we do that, what do you guys wanna do?" And people then picked up responsibilities on every side – engine, shaders, art, tools, design, and all of that builds great technology. We'll start a new technology at one point or another, but knowing that these people are there makes you keep going.



AARON MCHARDY

## ...the perfect goal?

I'm a passer of the ball. I grew up playing central midfield, so that's my passion: setting up goals. I lean towards the 25-one-touch-passes-that-break-somebody-open type of goal. Though that's not to say that I don't appreciate a good scorcher from distance...



RYAN BARNARD

## ...doing 'post-apocalyptic' different?

The big secret to that for us is we have to say it's 'mid-crisis' – that terminology is something we're owning with the game to make sure that we don't get lumped in with a post-apocalyptic crowd. We're on the brink of that moment where things could crash: there is a reason to fight and there is something you're fighting for.

HAJIME TABATA

## ...the perfect Final Fantasy?

I have not pulled that off yet so I do not know! Please come back and ask me that question once I have created the perfect Final Fantasy game! [Laughs]



PIERS JACKSON

## ...developing for Morpheus?

Plan. Think about it up front. Everything that you know through your decades of working in the games industry, you start again when it comes to working in VR on Morpheus and you build from the ground up. You have to think about what you're doing. For us, we always knew we wanted to challenge ourselves. We wanted to make a first-person shooter – we're Guerrilla, and we've done this in the past. People say you can't make a first person shooter; some say you shouldn't make a first person shooter for Morpheus. But that's the goal we set ourselves. And we deconstructed it and just built it from the ground up.



ERIC NEWGARD

## ...making a perfect replica?

Thinking outside the box. There isn't a guide or manual for making things that haven't been made before, so you have to be innovative and bold enough to try out methods that seem strange or unconventional. Don't be afraid to mess up, it's how you learn!



...a little bit of a...  
...to recreate it...  
...form as it is to be...

# What's the secret to...



**I** don't know that we know, but we try pretty hard. For us the goal is to get someone you haven't seen before; have someone a bit exotic, a bit outlandish. Someone with a personal relationship with the character and someone with strong opinions. Hopefully someone fresh. You know, I don't think there's any secret – you just grind away at it and then try and find a good actor who can embody it.



**A**ctually, I'd like to know the answer to that one myself! What I can tell you is, a thematic pillar of my game design is that feeling of accomplishment you get after surmounting incredible odds. All I do, really, is mull over how to go about making epic obstacles the player can set about conquering.



## ...being different?

Just try and think outside of the box and try not to copy what other people are doing. If you see someone else is doing something, let them do it and you do something different. That's it.



TARO Y

## ...making a cult hit?

There's no recipe of course, but I have never wanted to make 'cult' games anyway. It's just... I suppose I have always tried to stay away from the mainstream kind of games. I wouldn't say I'm consciously making a very strange or weird game that ends up in people's memory. I just don't mix with what everybody likes. Another thing is, it's probably essential to find a producer who allows you to make anything you want to do. Nier New Project is so weird, in a way, so I think (producer Yosuke Saito is) mad to invest so much money into it. [Laughs] There was a kind of 'Marmite effect' - either you loved it or you hated it - but in Japan there were lots of gamers who were mad about Nier.

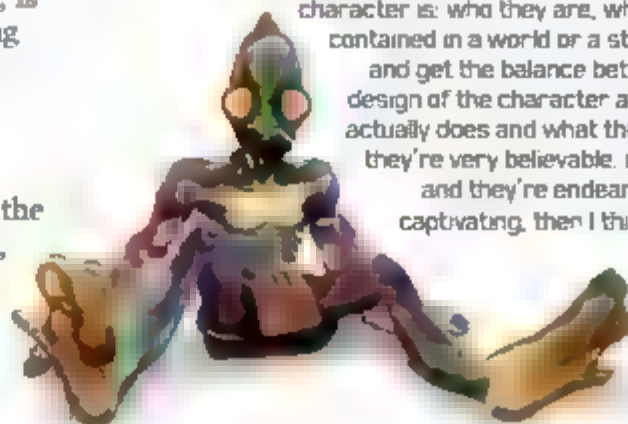


LORNE LANNING

## ...creating an icon?

I think a lot of it is sheer luck; it's luck and timing. It's one thing to want to create something, it's another thing for it to become that. But the key in my opinion - and there's a lot of them out there - is that it takes some depth of character. On the surface, Abe is a very superficial character with very simple needs. But underneath there's a lot going on. There's a lot driving who that character is and I think it's similar in that respect to film in that we appreciate deeper characters better.

For gaming I think the character really has to synergise with what the gameplay is, meaning it has to be integral to what that character is: who they are, what they do, how they're contained in a world or a story. If you get that right and get the balance between the production design of the character and what the character actually does and what they really believe... when they're very believable, in a believable universe and they're endearing and emotionally captivating, then I think you've got a chance.



DAVID JAFFE

## ...creating a new IP?

The secret is doing it. The secret is saying, "Do you have an idea that you fall in love with that you can't stop thinking about wanting to make?" I'm always at least one or two chess moves ahead, so there are two games I'm dying to make after Drawn To Death, but I don't know if we'll get to.

And then the secret, really, is just the hard work of building the team, finding the money and finding a publisher. It's finding those partners that you can surround yourself with who can make not just the game that you want to make, but who can turn that game into something even better. So that's the secret.

# What's the secret to Naughty Dog's success?



EVAN DORN  
NAUGHTY DOG  
CO-PRESIDENT



CHRIS TAYLOR  
NAUGHTY DOG  
CO-PRESIDENT

I don't know if there's a secret so much as it's a lot of hard work by a very talented team. We put a lot of faith in the people who we hire, and just count on them to hold that really high standard and that culture. It's really about the people, and we try to move all of the roadblocks out of the way for them just to do what they do best, which is create games.

We keep a small team mentality as much as we can, even though we have a pretty big number of people. We just make sure that people can communicate easily. We don't have producers who just manage their time — everyone is their own producer here, which is a little bit different to what other studios do. We're just trying to make sure that they do what they love, and that's the most important thing.



# What's the secret to...

NOUREDDINE ABBOLD

## ...reinventing a beloved franchise?

I won't give lessons towards other games, but we're doing two things on our game. One is to stay true to the franchise: the core of it. As all Ghost Recon fans know, the key to Ghost Recon is those tactical elements and understanding that they are the core of the franchise. And then we also look at what the technology is bringing us. We were facing, in the past, many limitations; many things we couldn't do. When we saw the new consoles arriving we saw it was fantastic – we could increase the world [size] not for the sake of increasing it but to give many options to the players, more than we've ever had in the history of the franchise.



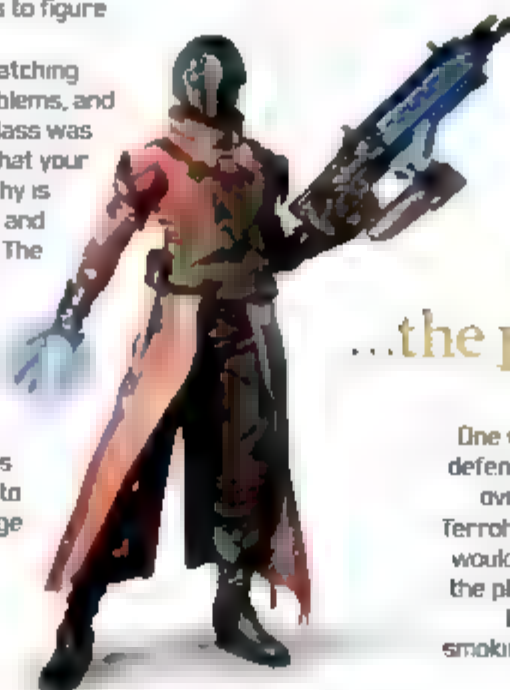
LUKE SMITH

## ...great endgame content?

I don't know what the secret to great endgame content is. I don't know that anyone does. For The Taken King, we wanted to have a cool thrill-ride through the campaign and then [for you to] be ejected out of that and have a bunch of different stuff for you to go out and do: activities that can reach and grab you for every mood, whether you're interested in Strikes, or running around the Dreadnaught fortress to figure out how it works.

The thing that I'm most excited about is watching groups of people come together to solve problems, and in a bunch of ways that's what the Vault Of Glass was: it was a series of interconnected problems that your group of six needed to solve. That philosophy is definitely present in some of The Taken King and certainly present in the Dreadnaught design. The design goal was for it to be an inscrutable, loot-filled fortress, and the thing that we imagined when we talk about it is, "How are the communities on the internet going to band together to put it all together?"

It becomes a cool opportunity for the Community (with a capital C!) to solve puzzles that we've constructed for them, and then to build puzzles into a ritual that they can engage with and come back and check out.



CHRISTIAN ELVERDAM

## ...the perfect hit?

We've obviously thought about that a lot! I would boil it down to freedom of choice. We're trying to create a sandbox with that very clear rule of 'There is our Hitman and the target – the rest is all up to you.' That would be my interpretation, and then all the variations of that is what makes the game fun because you don't know what to expect from each hit to the next. Freedom of choice: a target and a Hitman.



ALMIR LISTO

## ...the perfect heist?


To bring the right people – that's the first step. If you have the right crew with you when you heist, you can come out of any difficult situation. If you have the wrong crew you might want to stealth the heist but someone is a loose cannon and suddenly the sh\*t hits the fan and everything goes nuts. The other thing is to have the right setup. If you're going to do a stealth heist, you need to dress for the occasion. The same goes for a loud mission. When you basically want to go in guns blazing you need to have the right skillsets, the right weapons, and the right mask of course – because you've got to look the part as well in order to commit the perfect crime.



ANDREW WITTS

## ...the perfect siege situation?

One where the defence is ready and has set up their defences [properly], because without that the siege is over very quickly! When we were making Siege's Terrohunt mode, we knew all the ingredients that the AI would have to use. We wanted the AI to be aware that the players were coming so, in the case of the Disarm Bomb game mode, the AI is not sitting there smoking cigarettes anymore; they're actively prepared and they set traps.



20TH ANNIVERSARY

Antoniades started out as the director, writer and programmer on Xerox's Kung Fu Chess.





TAMEEM ANTONIADES  
NINJA THEORY CO-FOUNDER

# What's the secret to perfect action?

I think it's probably expression. Good action involves letting the player express themselves and create their own style with the tools that they have.

So the tools can be simple, like it is in something like Bomberman, for example. I would say that's a perfect action game, because the mechanics are incredibly simple but there's endless variation and expression in how you fight and how you play. In a combat game, giving the player the tools to express themselves and then rewarding them for that is the goal – not being too prescriptive.



Ninja Theory's reboot of the DMC franchise revitalised Dante and co.

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## What's the secret to...

perfect  
action

I think it's really obvious: make something that doesn't look like all the other videogames. Ours is a very conservative medium. So many games look and feel similar, and even the slightest deviation is heralded as ground-breaking or risky. Make something that is a bigger deviation from the norm (as we did with Hohokum) and everyone asks you what drugs you were on when you made it.

But it isn't actually that crazy. It's just that in terms of how it looks, feels and sounds and plays, Hohokum had more in common with stuff going on outside of videogames. If more people were doing that then it would be a lot harder to stand out, but at the moment it's like shooting space marines in a barrel.



What's the  
secret to...

I get a suspicious feeling that there is a deeper underlying purpose to this question, but I'll provide a straight answer in any case! My advice: bring together, and stick with, a group of friends who you can trust with your life.



What's the  
secret to...

The idea for Wattam came when I was playing with my two-year-old son. I'm Japanese, you're British, and I can speak in Japanese but you wouldn't get it; so we all have many differences such as language, countries, age, etc. But maybe we can get over differences by making something nice – something fun like a videogame with different people. Stacking (Wattam's) characters is just fun, and exploding them is a lot of fun too!



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HARRISON PINK  
TELLTALE'S THE WALKING DEAD DESIGNER

# What's the secret to an emotional scene?

If I knew that, I'd be a millionaire! You have to earn it. Emotional connections just can't be forged. You can't say: this person is your brother, you care about them, now you care.

You have to earn that through time spent together. If we just told you, "Hey Lee, Clementine is yours, take care of her." Well, he doesn't care about something right away — she has to earn her place in your heart. There's a reason that she says you have to be quiet. There's a reason that she gives you the hammer. There's a reason that she does all the things that she does. It's because when that game was being made, the leads on that game knew that people are going to be opposed to taking care of Clementine.

We, as gamers, have been taught that dealing with

escort quests and dealing with little kids in games is just a pain in the ass. They're just really lame and that stuff sucks. So there's going to be an emotional bias in games having this character wander around with you and having to protect them. So we have to do everything we can to get the player to buy in. You can't just tell the player: you have now bought in. You have to just earn it.

One of the ways that Telltale makes games is, when you make a dialogue choice, you press a button and the game records that and remembers that. We only show the big five choices at the end, but it records everything you're doing. Basically, what we're doing

is just asking: who is the person on the other side of the screen? What affects you? What do you care about? And then try and tailor the gameplay to really hone in on that.

You can't just pop into a seat with somebody sitting next to you and go: "Oh I care about you now." The person has to be important to you and there has to be an emotional bond that you have to build over time. If we tried to pull the stunt we did at the end of season one at the beginning or in the middle, it just wouldn't land because you just needed those many, many hours — months, really — of people thinking about the game and just digesting it; emotionally deconstructing it in their heads.

So I guess the actual secret is time — to be consistent with the characters and just give them the space to form their own connections. A Telltale game's at its strongest when you and your avatar in the world both feel the same way about something. So when Lee's like, "I'm going to protect you Clementine," and a player's like, "Hell yeah, I'm going to protect you Clementine," that's when a Telltale game is firing on all cylinders.

From the beginning of episode one to episode five, season one's story takes place across a four-month period.

CLOTHES



# What's the secret to...

ED BOON

## ...a great Fatality?

It has to be a combination of entertaining and shocking - just the right balance between those two.



CHARLES CECIL

## ...designing an iconic conundrum?

Nobody cares how difficult a puzzle is, as long as when you solve it you go, "Of course!" If you turn around and say to yourself, "How could I possibly have known that?" then it's a really bad puzzle. Point and click adventures are full of bad puzzles. Frankly, it's so much easier to come up with bad puzzles. Anybody could come up with rubbish puzzles.

We work really really hard to make our puzzles logical in the context of the objects you are using and also in the context of that character and what their motivations are at that time, plus the story. We reject so many puzzles. We see things that are nice ideas but they aren't logical.

So, number one: it's got to be logical in the context of the character and the story. Two: it's got to be difficult for that, "Of course," moment. And three: if it's going to be iconic it's got to be fun as well. It needs to be the climax of various elements all coming together both in terms of a narrative and in terms of breadcrumb trails that you're given. You mentally go, "There's a reason I have this object and there's a reason he said that," and then, suddenly, the very best puzzles are the ones where everything comes back and you go, "OF COURSE!" That, "Of course," comes from the object manipulation, from the narrative perspective and the character motivation. That is how you truly develop an iconic puzzle.



JOHN CENA

## ... never giving up?

[Laughs] If you want to give up, don't.



KEIJI INAFUNE

## ...being mighty?

Being mighty is about believing in your own abilities and having confidence in what you set out to achieve.



GUHA BALA

## ...designing a great Skylander?

So this is both fun as well as moving. We had a Make A Wish child come to our studio who's a huge Skylanders fan and has a terrible terminal illness. Skylanders helped him get through some of the treatment he had, so as part of his Make A Wish he chose to come to the studio. Our concept artist and designer sat with him and he came prepped with ideas for what his ideal Skylander would be. They were after his dogs,

so there's a real world inspiration, and then as he was talking the designer broke it down into fantastical powers and attributes to help him structure an upgrade tree. As these unfolded the concept artist drew the visuals. He came up with Lieutenant Luck-A-Lot and Sergeant Sleep-A-Lot. It was a really special, moving moment.

So that's similar to how we come up with a Skylander in the sense that we look at: What's really original and meaningful? Well, something the player can attach to. What is something we can do to make it interesting in gameplay? They're the powers that don't just broadly fit into classes but make a Skylander memorable as the guy who does that. And then a visual treatment that makes you remember it. That's essentially the process we go through, but it's fun to see it play out in a child's mind as well.



SEAN MCCABE

## ...a great reimagination?

I think it's being a fan, ourselves. We are some of the biggest Ratchet fans on the planet - I didn't work on the original but the original Metropolis demo is why I came to Insomniac and why I was drawn to the company. We have so many people who love this universe and know so much about it. That's where it starts for me - it's just loving Ratchet & Clank.





DAVID CAGE

# What's the secret to a great plot twist?

**I wish I knew the magic recipe for a great plot twist, because I would use it all the time!**

I also know many writers in videogames, TV series or films who would kill to discover it. Unfortunately, the truth is that there is none. The idea is very simple: creating a major surprise at some point in the story that will make the audience reconsider the entire story under a different light, but the implementation is extremely challenging.

The tricky part is that, beyond being a surprise, a twist also needs to be consistent and coherent, so the audience doesn't feel they have been cheated with a twist coming from nowhere or that they absolutely could not guess. If you reveal that the murderer was the passer-by walking in your first shot, it is not a great twist, because there is no way the audience could guess it and it has no real connection with the rest of the story.

So a successful twist is a very subtle balance between giving the right clues to the audience so they have a chance to guess the true story if they are really clever (and most of all, everything makes sense if they watch the story again knowing the secret) but at the same time not making it too obvious so it's unlikely

that anyone will be able to guess it before it's revealed.

For all these reasons, twists are actually quite rare in films and even more so in games. They are very difficult to build and they can be quite frustrating if they are not implemented correctly. My favourite twists are probably M Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*, Alan Parker's *Angel Heart* and Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others*. Watching the film for the second time offers a very different experience, which is one of the most enjoyable aspects of plot twists.

I had a lot of fun writing the plot twist in *Heavy Rain* (although it was quite a challenge to write a twist involving the player...). What

I enjoyed the most was to see how surprised and shocked some players were when they discovered the truth. I remember how much we feared that it would be revealed right away on forums by the very first players completing the game, but most have been very co-operative and kept the secret for themselves.

Because, of course, the most important thing to remember about plot twists is: never spoil them!





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David's real name  
is actually David De  
Gruccio. YOU DIDN'T SEE  
THAT COMING, DID YOU?



DAVID VONDERHAAR  
CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III'S DESIGN DIRECTOR

# What's the secret to the perfect Call Of Duty map?

**W**e have a couple of things that are super-important to us when it comes to map-making, and these were all things that we had to relearn because of all the new movement with Black Ops III's thrust jump and wall run and swimming and power-sliding. We talk a lot about what we call 'keeping the combat in frame', and what I mean by that is no matter where you're standing, anywhere in the map, you feel like you have a picture in front of you of where the action could be.

We don't want you to feel like you can be, for lack of a better phrase, shot from anywhere. So certainly, people can come up behind you and people can flank you, but you don't want to feel enveloped or surrounded just all the time. When you start a match — and you look out — you need to understand right away that the way to navigate the map is this way, this way, and the way. So there's never more than (decision-making-wise) three decisions in your brain about how you move on where you 'check-down'. And that's really key.

What I mean by that is I check that corner, I check that window, I check that path and people are most likely to be there, there or there. So if I make the wrong decision about my check-down, which order I go in, then it's all on me, because I should've checked-down in a different order. But if I check them down correctly then I have the advantage in the fight.

[For Black Ops III] what was pretty interesting to us was that we were making all the new combat movement mechanics very early on in development and we forgot to... we should apply them when you're... vertical, or...

and started to feel good when we went right back to that core principle philosophy about three-lane design, about keeping the combat in frame and about being able to check-down.





# What's the secret to...

CHARLIE MCDONNELL

## ...becoming a YouTube star?

Get a time machine, go back to 2007, start making videos and hope for the best. If possible, be a cute British boy. If there are other secrets, I'm not aware of them.



PHILIP RING

## ...the perfect Lego level?

It doesn't need to be about the combat and it doesn't need to be about the puzzles – it needs to be something that you weren't expecting. So you're going through a level and you'll see something and it'll either be on an epic scale that you weren't expecting or there are loads of secrets or loads of cool things.

So there's genuine surprise.

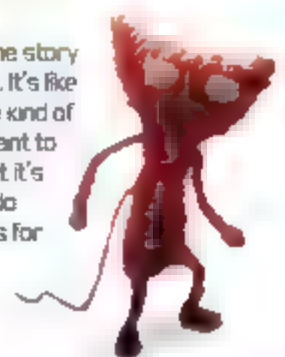
We know that with The Avengers, for instance, at the point that you're Thor fighting Loki at the top of Stark Tower, we want that to be really epic but it also has to create surprise. It needs to show something that you weren't expecting because otherwise it's just a one-to-one representation of the film, and we don't like to do that. We like to do something [new], whether that's adding humour or puzzles. Whatever it is, it's about that genuine surprise so people see it and go, "Wow! That's cool. I wasn't expecting that." That, to me, is what's great about these games. It's that ability to say, "You know what? I thought I knew what was going to happen and I wasn't expecting that!"



MARTIN SAHLIN

## ...telling the perfect story without speech?

The secret is letting the player come to the story rather than just trying to push it on them. It's like once we have their attention – which we kind of get through the character – then they want to experience it and want to figure out what it's all about. Then we don't really have to do much more than supply interesting things for them to find.



WOLF

think the real part where Battlefield shines is in its breadth and depth. If you're a super-accurate, high speed twitch-shooter guy – a real gunslinger – you can do that.

But there are so many ways to be successful through helping out teammates, operating vehicles and doing all kinds of stuff. A great Battlefield map needs to allow all those different people to

succeed and have fun in all those different ways. So you really need spatial variety.

You need all kinds of areas: some of them that are protected from the vehicles; some where the vehicles rule; some that are way high up; some that are way low down. And of course, a good flow between all those different types of spots, so different people can all have a good time.

# What's the secret to...



**JONATHAN BLOW**

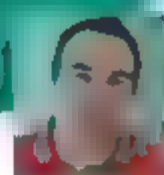
**...perfecting a puzzle?**

**W**ell you have to define perfecting a puzzle, right? Like what does 'perfect' mean? I don't think of it that way. I don't think of perfecting it.

In *The Witness* especially, the puzzles are all designed around what we think is happening inside someone's mind as they first see it. You see something, you have an interpretation of what maybe that is, and then there's this process. You're

investigating: "Let me try something..." or, "Oh, that wasn't the right thing," or, "Oh that was the right thing," or, "It gave me a little traction and then I can develop my understanding."

There's a whole arc of what happens, and I'm trying to design for that whole arc, whereas I feel that a lot of people don't necessarily do that. They're just like, "Here's a thing to solve." I think designing for that full experience is important.



**ALISTAIR HUMPHREYS**

**...getting started on a new project?**

**Y**ou've got to start. I had a great presentation at a thing EA did — it gets a bunch of people together and brings in some external speakers, and we had a wonderful one by a guy called Alistair Humphreys.

It was really inspiring. He classes himself as an adventurer and he tells a wonderful story, and he says: think big, start small, but start. And that's the thing I think that struck me the most: you've just got to start.



BRIAN FLEMING

## ...a perfect sandbox?

In a game where players can go anywhere, actually getting there has to be a huge part of the fun. I don't care if it's cars, motorcycles, bicycles or super powers - moving around, over and through the world has always been an area of critical focus for us. Our measure of success is, after you play the game and you're walking around outside, are you constantly inspired to try the things you did in the game? If yes, then that's what victory feels like!



NAOKI YOSHIDA

## ...making a great MMO?

The MMORPG genre is very risky in terms of business - there are so many features that you might want to include that drop out. You shouldn't give up, say, when the server structure has some issues or some limitations - you just need to explain to the community what is happening. The communication to the players is that we never give up. Voices from the community tend to be more like a negative thing: "Please fix this," rather than, "This part was really good." So all the development team reading the feedback and messages could get hurt, but this is the community's true voice. It's not that they're attacking us or anything, so the development team have to be motivated to keep going and try to improve the game. Basically don't give up!



SARAH WELLOCK

## ...wowing gamers?

**W**ow. That is almost a question for the audience isn't it? So I think people love... they love the idea of Horizon's mechanical creatures against a backdrop of a beautiful post-apocalyptic world.

That's definitely something that people picked up on. But I think it's also, probably, the concept in its entirety. It's you being Aloy; this young woman who's a robot huntress, and then you see this world you could call somewhat

mysterious, and you cross paths with these gigantic machines that clearly overpower you.

As soon as you start dissecting it and selecting the one best thing that wows people, you lose the entirety of the concept. I think it's particularly the combination of the juxtaposition of nature and machines. It's the juxtaposition of Aloy's size and cleverness against the brutish power of these machines - that's exactly what appeals to people.

## ...the perfect community-created level?

The best levels have a lot of verticality and they really play with the idea of space and layers in the game. We've had some great levels done - one of our first big LittleBigPlanet 2 levels was really great because it played with the idea of big and small and height whilst actually not being that complicated for people to play. Some of the levels that don't do so well are the ones that feature tech over actual gameplay, so when people jump in they want to play but they can't get from A to B. I think the three key ingredients to making the best levels are the location, patience and just fun - that last one's what LittleBigPlanet's all about.





TIM SCHAFER  
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS  
FOUNDER

# What's the secret to making a classic?

**U**h... Let's see, a lot of coffee... A classic is something that people care about long after it was made, and so I feel like that means you should be doing something that connects on a human level.

Whether it's a drama or a comedy, you can have this connection between the person making it and the person playing it. And if it's really human and sincere, it will just last for many years. If what you're doing is not based on novelty or some kind of trend but a more human thing, then I think it will last.



Grim Fandango  
© 1998 Double Fine Productions



# What's the secret to...

PEX CROWLE

## ...having fun?

Wow, that is quite a hard question! We used to joke about it, particularly on LittleBigPlanet. We used to say, "This level isn't fun enough," and then we'd be like, "But what does that mean?" (Laughs) There's an element of self-expression definitely, whether you're throwing mud pies at each other when you're eight-years-old or you're exploring an alien world on your PlayStation. I think there's an element of just feeling like you've found something that wasn't necessarily created just for you – you just found it. Say, with the mud pie situation: you tried to throw something at one person but it hit someone else. Or whether that's in a more physics-sandbox type of a game, where something doesn't happen quite as it was set up but you get a different outcome and have an enjoyable reaction to the situation... which is a really abstract way of trying to describe it!



PETE PARSONS

## ...building something new?

At Bungie we've always been ambitious, and for Destiny we asked: "What is the game we've always wanted to make?" And that's what we set out to do. You start with this big ambitious dream and you start doing some research and development for some of the possibilities – what would happen in these large public areas, for instance? – and you don't really know what the answer is, but you need to start asking all the right questions. Fortunately we answered some of the better questions!



STEVE JARRATT

## ...launching a magazine?

Be in the right place at the right time. Have a passion for the subject matter. Surround yourself with talented people. Understand your craft; learn from others. Don't overcomplicate things. Know what your readers respond to. Try and launch something connected with a product or topic that is immensely popular, with the backing of one of the world's biggest electronics companies, and then make the magazine invaluable by sticking a demo disc on the front. Easy!

JASON VANDENBERGHE

## ...great melee combat?

One of the most important things is the mind-game. It's that I am trying to predict what you are trying to predict, right? That experience is central, and for For Honor, we've put that on the right stick and we've put that in our stances. I need to look to see where you are defending yourself – and I need to try and get there – but moving my stick in a position to attack in the place you're open then opens me up... So I have to make this decision about what I'm going to do.

Fundamentally, that's where it comes from, and it's the heart of For Honor. You take that system where I'm trying to guess the mind-game, and it gets better and better and better when those choices get stronger and different from each other. This is sort of the Yomi theory of fight stuff. If you're familiar with it, it's sort of the essence of what makes fighting great. "I think your best choice is to attack me like this, but I know you know that I know that, so I'm probably going to guess that you're going to do the other thing..." and then BANG! I've out-fought you, right?

That's also how it is in real life when you're doing real fighting: that same dynamic of trying to predict what you're going to do. If I can catch you, if I can predict it correctly, I can win the fight in one hit.



MARC-ALEXIS CÔTÉ

## ...a great location?

A city that has a lot of diversity. That's something that London is providing us with like no other city before. I remember when I visited London – I was amazed by how each part of the city feels a bit different. You can feel it was the centre of an empire and a lot of things that were inspired by the empire came back to London.

So we can make every borough – I was told not to use the word 'district' ever – so I'm just trying to get rid of it but sometimes I slip! – feel different. The player should feel the poverty in Whitechapel, and when they're in Westminster they should feel more political influence. When you're near Buckingham Palace you should feel more royal influence, and when you're in the City Of London you feel more of the financial side of it.

One of the places that's very different from what we see today is the South Shore, with all its factories and everything. Everywhere the player goes, each borough will have a different story.





SEAN MURRAY

PLUS: JAMES HANZARA ON LIFE

# What's the secret to being a successful indie developer?

Indie developers are the new norm. With the rise of digital distribution, indie developers have found a way to reach a large audience without the backing of a major publisher. But what's the secret to being a successful indie developer? Sean Murray, author of the upcoming book *Indie Game Development*, shares his insights.

Indie game development is a hot topic right now. With the rise of digital distribution, indie developers have found a way to reach a large audience without the backing of a major publisher. But what's the secret to being a successful indie developer? Sean Murray, author of the upcoming book *Indie Game Development*, shares his insights.







Little Games' next game  
is No Man's Sky – you'll  
hear much more about it  
in a future issue of UPN

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY

# What's the secret to...

CHRIS PAYTON  
SNIPER ELITE III HEAD OF ART

## ...the perfect headshot?

Slow it right down. Blur all the extraneous detail, drop it right back. Give more depth, contrast, colour to the thing you're looking at. Give it a dynamic play and don't let it get repetitive. With your dynamic camera, make it so you could shoot 500 different people in the head and every time it's going to be different. I'm talking about it from an art perspective, but don't overlook the other departments either. The killcam without the sound? Rubbish. All the departments – the sound, the design, the code team – really have to work together.



You have to have the right team. If you don't have the right team you don't have a studio. I've been on a lot of great teams and a lot of really dysfunctional teams. Our team is just the greatest team – it's like a dream come true for me and hopefully all the other guys because there's just so much trust and faith in each other that I don't have to be involved in every decision. It was difficult for me in the beginning to let go of that, but it was definitely a learning experience. I hired these guys because they're my friends first and they're awesome game developers, and Adrift is their game now. This is not just my game.



EX R. GOPULOS  
TFMS F

## action experience?

I'd say that there is no such thing as 'the perfect rhythm action experience' because rhythm action mechanics are just one ingredient in a total play experience, and the universe of possible play experiences that could utilise rhythm action is so vast. Take three examples. Amplitude, Fantasia: Music Evolved and Rhythm Heaven. All three of these games have rhythm action at the heart of their gameplay, but the 'secrets' (such as they are) to making these games feel great are completely different from one game to the next.

# What's the secret to...

HIROKI CHIBA  
WORLD OF FINAL FANTASY DIRECTOR

## ...Final Fantasy's success?

Final Fantasy is always looking for new things to do: new challenges and new surprises to give to fans. That's why the fans have stayed with us for so long.



ANTHONY BURCH  
BORDERLANDS 2 WRITER

## ...making somebody laugh?

God, if I knew that then we would have scored even higher! Comedy is built on surprise: setting up an expectation and then going against that expectation. The big difference is about changing expectation in ways that make you pleasantly surprised, or unpleasantly surprised if you're going for dark humour. For example, the 'Shoot this Guy in the Face' quest. The reason that works – if that quest does work and you do find it funny, which you're welcome not to – is you've spent the entire time killing a bunch of people who don't want to get killed, and doing these really, really long quests that have many multiple objectives and are really difficult, and then you meet one person who wants to be killed, has no gameplay associated with him and the quest takes two seconds to finish. It's a pattern break.

Because it's the opposite of what you expect, and because that guy just has a really good line when he's going to get shot and says thank you, it makes you laugh. It's sort of the straight man/funny guy thing – you need something that's relatively normal for a long time to set up a pattern so that when the funny thing happens which breaks the pattern it feels like a laugh. Rather than just like, "This is a random world where stupid sh\*t's happening all the time and who knows? Anything could happen! Ha, ha, ha..." That can get tiresome after a while.



SHINJI MIKAMI  
RESIDENT EVIL 5  
THE EVIL WITHIN CREATOR

## ...scaring somebody?

Dark and narrow, that's scary. That's not my definition but that's a general definition: it's dark and narrow or small. The asylum in The Evil Within, that's scary!



RHIANNA PRATCHETT  
SCRIPT WRITER

## ...writing a great gaming script?

Use all the good words in a pleasing order! But seriously, I'm not sure there's one 'secret' to it as it's down to a combination of factors. Making sure that the narrative and gameplay mesh well together is probably most important. That means story and game design have to go hand-in-hand, not story on top of gameplay. Story should be like the chocolate chips in the game cookie, not the icing on the cake. Thinking about story, character and narrative flow early on certainly helps, as does getting in narrative professionals to work on it. Ultimately it's about treating narrative as seriously as any other part of a game's development.



PHIL ROBB  
TURTLE ROCK CO-FOUNDER & EVOLVE  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

## ...crafting the perfect co-op experience?

Everyone's going to have a different idea about what that is. You can put people together in a group and order them to cooperate and some of them certainly might, but the way the internet works these days and the way gamers tend to be, it's safe to assume that they're probably not going to...

You've got to try to build in game mechanics that encourage co-op and reward players based on what they're supposed to do. So when you're the medic and you're healing your guys, you're getting positive reinforcement. Firstly from your guys, because you're more likely to win if you work together. And then on top of that, at the end of the round we show you how you did and all the healing you did: "Good job!"

If somebody doesn't want to co-operate there's not a lot you can do to force them, and that's one of the weaknesses of multiplayer gaming. The thing is, I like hanging out with my friends. When I can't hang out with my friends I certainly like playing games with my friends. So what makes a perfect co-op experience? I can't really say; I just know that at Turtle Rock we make the kind of games that we want to play, and all of our ideas come when we're sitting around and we say, "Hey, wouldn't it be cool if..."

Usually it's a very simple idea. Sometimes it's out of the blue. Sometimes it's because we played some game that's either mediocre or bad, but there's some little element there where they really hit the nail on the head and have some tiny gem – and we don't know why they didn't take that one part and make it into a full game. If you ever hear us trying to tell you we have some high-minded artsy-fartsy explanation about why we've done a game it's just bullsh\*t – we just want to have an experience that no one else was giving us so we decided to make it.





SHUHEI YOSHIDA  
SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT  
WORLDWIDE STUDIOS PRESIDENT

# What's the secret to PlayStation's success?

**T**he 'secret' of PlayStation's success? I would pick something we at PlayStation have always strongly believed from developing the original PlayStation 'til today – that is believing in the power of talented, passionate game developers.

PlayStation has created powerful console hardware taking advantage of cutting edge technology; democratized game publishing by adopting disc media with very low cost and fast manufacturing capabilities; marketed videogames as a cool interactive entertainment that all ages of people can enjoy and share. But we did so always believing that by creating a powerful platform and ecosystem, talented game developers will create amazing gameplay experiences to entertain consumers in the global market.



Yoshida's now one of our favourite protagonists thanks to his Super Time Force Ultra cameo.





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